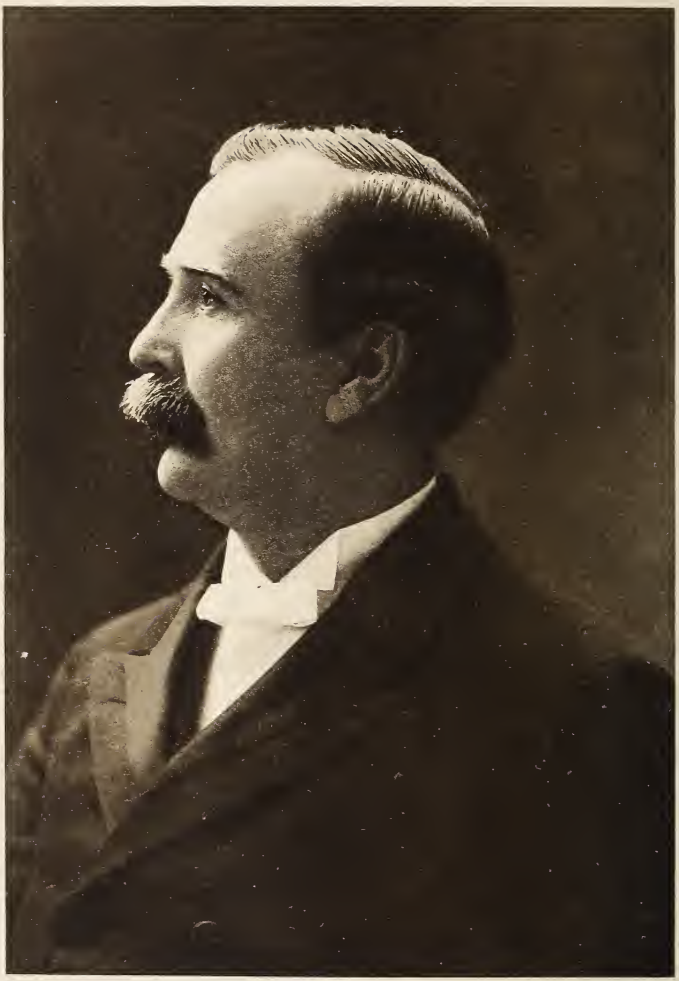

Louis Albert Banks

THE KING'S STEWARDS

BY

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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY
150 Nassau St., New York

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I.

The King's Stewards.

"Stewards over all the substance and possession of the king."—1 Chronicles 28: 1.

This is from the swan-song of David. His great career was drawing near to its close. He had fought his last battle. He had sung his last psalm. His fingers were no longer light enough in their touch to awaken the music of the harp. Yet the soul of the man was stronger than ever.

Before he left the world David determined to make sure that the one great purpose of his life in which he had been thwarted should be fulfilled after his death. And so he called the people together. It was a magnificent array. The great soldiers of the kingdom were there, the royal family, the princes of the different tribes, and after them the men of wealth and public spirit, the stewards of the king's possessions. The strength, and riches, and honor of the nation gathered about the old king on that last great, splendid occasion. Then for the last time David stood on his feet before them to speak. And

when did a man make a nobler speech? Poor, indeed, must be your imagination if you cannot behold him. There he stands, the grey-haired shepherd king. What memories gather about him as the people look on his face. They think of him when, as a youth, he won his spurs slaying the lion and the bear that sought to rob his flock yonder on the hills of Bethlehem. Some of the old men of that company remember how he came down to the army of Saul with a shepherd's sling in his hand on that bright morning, so long ago, when Goliath for the fortieth time strode forth from the army of the Philistines with his wicked taunt against God and his people, making a challenge that sent terror to the bravest hearts in Saul's camp. And the old men, who were only boys then, recall with tearful memories how the young David went forth with his shepherd's staff and his sling, and came back again with Goliath's sword in one hand and the head of the giant in the other. They recall the long days of exile, and some remember the hiding away in the mountains and in the caves, when David was hunted to the earth like a fox. Then they remember the crowning, and the triumph, and the growth of the kingdom.

To others there David has been more a poet than a king. Their souls have fed on his music as bees feed on the honey of flowers, and David the Psalmist has been to them as the voice of God, speaking to them in all the deep experiences of pain and joy,

of health and weakness, of failure and triumph, of life and death.

Many men there are about him that recall this day incidents of that sad march when David fled into the wilderness to escape from Absalom. All that campaign comes back to them now as they look on the noble face of the old poet-king, that has on it already something of the glow of the other world so soon to dawn upon him. Oh, there is no one like David to them! From the time he defended his lambs yonder in Bethlehem until now, where was there ever one so picturesque, so daring, so chivalrous, so brave, so undaunted, yet so gentle and so tender? a man whose very failures, whose very weaknesses, seemed to bring him closer to them, because they showed the true longing and purpose of the heart of a man who sought to keep near to God. Take all this into your thought and feel if you can the thrill of it as that group of men stand about David, the grey-headed, as he speaks to them:

"Hear me, my brethren and my people: as for me, I had in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever." And then David goes on to tell

that it was the purpose of God that his son Solomon should be king, and should build the temple. Then he reveals to the people the kind of a temple it is to be, and ends his address with these wonderful sentences: "Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistering stones, and of divers colors, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance. Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all I have prepared for the holy house." Then David makes his new subscription of three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of silver to complete the temple. He has been saving this up for that purpose. Following, the old king takes up the subscription among his people. I see the glow on his face and the tears in his eyes, as he exclaims: "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

There was, as we would expect, a splendid response to the liberality and the appeal of the king. And after the generous subscription had been given, the historian says, "The people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart

they offered willingly to the Lord; and David the king also rejoiced with great joy."

There is nothing finer of its kind in the Bible, or in all literature, than the old king's prayer of thanksgiving after the money had been raised to build the temple. The writer of the Book of Chronicles says that David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said:

"Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thy holy name cometh of thy hand, and is all thine own. I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the upright-

ness of my heart I have willingly offered all these things; and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee."

I have lingered so long with this picture because there does not seem to me to be anything like it in the Bible, or indeed anywhere else, to give us so clear a suggestion of our relation to God as his stewards. And that is the great theme which I want to press home upon our hearts. David had before him the men who were the stewards of all the king's possessions. But he did not tax them, forcing them to give for the building of the temple, for he knew that would not please God. He took the nobler way: he opened his own heart to them; he told them of the longing he had had to build a palace, not for himself, but for God. He told how he had prepared for it, how willingly he poured out the great gifts which he named, and then he laid it upon their own hearts and consciences to decide, as God's stewards, what they ought to do in the case.

The point I wish to emphasize is suggested by the words of our text, " Stewards over all the substance and possession of the king." We are God's stewards. He has put great interests into our hands. They do not belong to us. We are only stewards. For the time being we control them, yet the time will come when we must give an account of our stewardship. Paul declares in writing to the Corinthians, that the one great thing about a stew-

ard is that he shall be found faithful; that he shall not come to think that he owns the goods himself, but that he shall conduct his stewardship with his thought constantly on what will please his Master, so that after a while, when his Lord shall come and call him to give an account, he shall be found faithful. In that same letter, and speaking of this very matter, Paul says that it does not much matter how men shall judge us, because they are easily mistaken, but the judgment of God, who gave us our stewardship, is what counts.

Let us think of some of the things over which we are the King's stewards. Time is one of them. God has given us these lives which we are living. Time does not belong to us. We could not hold on to an hour of it to save our souls. It is only loaned to us, or rather it is committed to us, moment by moment. We have all power over it while it lasts. We are free to do what we will in it while we have it, but we shall have to give an account of the way we use it. If we waste it, if we squander it, if we disgrace it, if we do evil with it, then we have been squandering the goods God gave us. For over these days that are passing by so swiftly we are God's stewards. Sometimes we hear foolish people talk about "killing time." I fear that that phrase "killing time" will be a very unpopular one on the Judgment Day. Oh, if we only knew how precious time is! If we could only appreciate the

glorious use we can make of it as God's stewards, we would not talk about murdering it in order to get rid of it.

We are God's stewards over our personal vitality; over the peculiar personal life that is in us. You may call it ability, or talent, or influence, or what you will, but it is the power of personality which is constantly either blessing or cursing the people who come in touch with us. Wherever Jesus went, virtue went out of him. Wherever man or woman touched him, with the awful appeal of human need and hunger, healing power went forth. Now God has committed to every one of us as stewards the power to bless others. If we live with open heart and loving faith toward him, we shall have sympathy, and inspiration, and divine comfort to give to those who come in contact with us. It will be true of us, as it was of the man about whom the poet wrote,

> "His life grew fragrant with the inner soul,
> And weary folk who passed him on the street
> Saw Christ's love beam from out the wistful eyes,
> And had new confidence in God and man."

We are stewards also of our money; and not only of that, but of our power to get money. Our property does not belong to us, for all the power to acquire it, and all the health, and strength, and ability, and time that were necessary for us to come into its possession were intrusted to us by the Lord. We

are only stewards, and must give an account again unto God as to how we have used what he has put in our hands. A friend once stepped into the office of a business man who was an earnest Christian, and found him standing at his desk with his hands full of bank-bills which he was carefully counting, as he laid one after another in a pile. After a moment, the man who had come in from the outside said to his friend, "Just count out fifty dollars from that pile of notes and make yourself, or some other person, a life member of this society"—and he went on to press his claim. His friend finished his count, and then replied, "I am handling trust funds now!" His answer suddenly illuminated the mind of the other man, who was soliciting funds for a good cause, and he replied with the question, "Do you ever handle anything but trust funds?" The message ought to come home to our hearts. All our funds are entrusted to us, and we must deal with them, not in a way simply to meet our own pleasure, or the pleasure of our friends, but the pleasure of God, to whom they belong. The question which Jesus put in the mouth of one of his characters in the parable of the unjust steward, is one which we should frequently put to ourselves, "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" I am sure that if we put that question honestly we shall find that we are greatly indebted to God.

A story is told of a merchant who was a God-

fearing man and had been very successful in business, but whose spiritual life—as is, alas, too often the case—did not grow rich in proportion to his bank account. His offerings to the Lord were but little, if any, larger than when he had been a poor man. One evening he had a wonderful dream. A visitor entered the apartment, and quietly looking around at the many luxuries by which he was surrounded, without any comment presented him with the receipts for his subscriptions to various societies, and urged their claims upon his enlarged sympathy. The merchant replied with various excuses, and at last grew impatient at the continued appeal. The stranger rose, and fixing his eyes on his companion, said, in a voice that thrilled to his soul, "One year ago to-night you thought that your daughter lay dying; you could not rest for agony. Upon whom did you call that night?" The merchant started and looked up. A change seemed to have passed over the whole form of his visitor, whose eyes were fixed upon him with a calm, penetrating look, as he continued, "Five years ago, when you lay at the brink of the grave, and thought that if you died then you would leave your family unprovided for—you remember how you prayed then. Who saved you then?" Pausing a moment, he went on in a lower and still more impressive tone: "Do you remember, fifteen years since, that time when you felt yourself so lost, so helpless, so hopeless; when you spent day

and night in prayer; when you thought that you would give the world for one hour's assurance that your sins were forgiven—who listened to you then?" "It was my God and Saviour!" said the merchant, with a sudden burst of remorseful feeling; "oh, yes, it was he!" "And has he ever complained of being called on too often?" inquired the stranger, in a voice of reproachful sweetness. "Say, are you willing to begin this night and ask no more of him, if he from this time will ask no more of you?" "Oh, never! never!" said the merchant, throwing himself at his visitor's feet. The figure vanished, and he awoke, his whole soul stirred within him. "O God, my Saviour! what have I been doing! Take all, take everything! What is all that I have, compared with what thou hast done for me?"

I would that God would give us some vision like that to arouse us to a proper sense of our dependence upon the loving kindness of our Heavenly Father. God save us from becoming purse-proud, or avaricious, or stingy, or greedy of money, for we are the King's stewards, and we are dealing only with what is his own. Surely when we remember his goodness to us, when we remember his mercy and love in Jesus Christ, we must meet him with open hand when he asks of us for the furtherance of his cause and kingdom.

II.

The Spiritual Stock Exchange.

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree."—Isaiah 55: 13.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because . . . he hath sent me to . . . give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."—Isaiah 61: 1, 3.

"For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron."—Isaiah 60: 17.

THERE is a spiritual stock exchange as well as an earthly one. The stock exchanges of London and Berlin and Paris and New York make so much noise, and occupy so large a space in the daily papers, that we are in danger of thinking they are the most important; but we could not make a greater mistake. The spiritual stock exchange is of infinitely more importance.

A strong and virile English author, writing recently of the power of the stock exchange in modern life, says that the roar of speculation so fills the air that it drowns all voices but its own; and he assures us that it is this all-absorbing devotion to earthly wealth and success against which Christ utters his

great protest. Christ will have his men rich, but according to a true scale of values. According to Jesus, the fool is he who is reckoning in the wrong coin, and is not "rich toward God." And our writer proceeds to show that Christ is not alone in this teaching. All the great world-systems that have really counted pronounce the same verdict. They all recognize that the true riches are in character. Plato puts material wealth a long way down in his scale of life's good. The Egyptians had a proverb which repeats almost literally Christ's saying about the treasure in heaven. Solon defined a happy man as "He who, moderately supplied with this world's goods, had done the most honorable deeds and lived temperately." Cyrus, dreading luxury, spoke of "Fertile soils as yielding infertile spirits." Socrates reminded the Athenian citizens how his one business had been to enjoin upon young and old that their chief care was not their persons nor properties, but the improvement of the soul. Rome echoes to Athens the same doctrine in the saying of Cicero, "Not to be covetous is the true riches." Ruskin's political economy is the translation into modern English of Christ's doctrine of wealth, and is summed up in one sentence: "The only real wealth consists in noble and happy human beings."

The statement is undoubtedly true that whenever any men or women put the possession of riches in

the first place in their thought and struggle, just so surely do they lose the art of successful living. They lose, of necessity, the true poise of mind, the proper mental attitude toward life. Give us an age when everybody is given up to making money, and to thought about that more than anything else, and all real excellence will cease. In such an age there can be no great music, no noble painting, no profound scholarship, no glorious poetry. Heroes will be smothered to death, and martyrs for conscience' sake will live only in legends and dreams of the past.

The passages which I have selected as the foundation for our theme are rich in their illustration of God's purpose toward us. It is not to take from, but to add to, our lives that God is speaking to us in the Gospel. He comes to offer us iron for our stone, brass for our wood, silver for our iron, and gold for our brass. He sent Christ to give men beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Instead of the thorn of selfishness, he would have us grow up to be the fir-tree with its balsam; instead of the brier with its pricking ugliness, he would have us transformed into the myrtle with its beauty and usefulness. This is the kind of spiritual stock exchange to which God calls us.

The precious thing about God's stock exchange is that he lays it down as a foundation stone that he is

able and willing through Jesus Christ to transform every sinner who will repent of his sins and take Christ as his Saviour, and will give him a pure heart, and a clean life, and a beautiful personality. And God lives up to that. But, remember, the condition is the utter giving up of our sins. An Irishman once went to confess to the parish priest, and obtain absolution. He was told to kneel at a chair. While on his knees the penitent allowed his eyes to wander about the room, finally resting on the priest's gold watch, which lay on a near-by table. It was but a moment before the watch was ticking away quietly inside Pat's blouse. The priest, returning, commanded him to acknowledge the sins for which he desired absolution. "Father," said the rogue, "I have stolen, and what shall I do?" "Restore," said the priest, "the thing you have stolen to its rightful owner." "Do *you* take it?" "No, I shall not; you must give it to the owner." "But he has refused to take it." "If this be the case, you may keep it." And so Pat was given full absolution, and reverently crossed himself and went away with an easy conscience. Now, is it not true that there are many men and women who live much like that? They are always in a chronic state of repentance, and yet they never really repent. They are always asking God to forgive them their sins, and yet, deep down in their hearts, they are con-

scious that they expect to commit the same sin again. There can be no exchange of spiritual gold for the brass of sin under such conditions.

There was a man who was an officer in the church, and who got drunk, and could not get any relief for his conscience. A faithful fellow church-member went to see him. The man who had been intoxicated said to him, "I cannot recover my peace of mind." They knelt down and prayed. Said the kind friend, "Tell the Lord all about it." In a stilted sort of way he began, "O Lord, thou knowest that in a moment of unwatchfulness thy servant was overtaken in a grievous sin." "Nonsense," said the wise friend; "tell the Lord that you got drunk." He rose from his knees and said he could not. His friend went away, but his awful conviction of sin grew worse and worse. Finally he sent for his friend to come back. When the latter came he told the offender, as before, to pray and tell the Lord all about it. It was quite a while before he could do it. But at last he blurted out, "O God, I don't know what to say. I am ashamed of myself. I went and got drunk!" With that his heart broke and the flood came, and with the flood and the storm there came the rainbow, and then the new heaven and the new earth, and his soul was stilled with peace. You can get peace in the same way. You will never get the forgiveness of your sins so long as you wrap up your sin in fine language and try to take the sting

out by making it seem better than it is. Repent of your sin. Look at it in all its ugliness, in all its slime, in all its loathsomeness, and turn away from it, and tell God about it. Ask him, for Christ's sake to forgive it, and he who came to give you beauty for ashes will hear your prayer.

Perhaps you are seeking to live the Christian life, but find yourself constantly shut out from the best life of a Christian by a temptation to which you have yielded, to think more of yourself than of the good of others. The great sin of good people is selfishness. The thorn branches and brier patches of human life about us would rapidly be changed into the sweet-smelling balsam and the fruitful myrtle, if only we Christians would live unselfishly the Christian life. That can overcome everything. The late Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock was passing one day a large hardware store and, remembering a number of articles of which he had need, entered. The clerks were probably busy, and doubtless inattentive. He waited a few minutes and no one took notice of him. Instead of going out in vexation, or rebuking them, he stepped to a shifting-ladder on one side, and, mounting it, took from a box several articles he desired, and placed them on the counter; then rolling the ladder along a little, he ascended again and got other articles, depositing them as before. This he repeated. Then, getting them together, he sought, and at length secured, the attention of one of the

clerks, who came forward, no doubt a little ashamed of the treatment the stranger had received, and evidently in no very agreeable mood.

"I want these articles. How much will they be?"

"Two dollars and a half," the clerk said, very crossly.

"Well, you may send them to the Rev. M. D. Babcock, 14 East Thirty-seventh street. And now, what is your name?"

The clerk, sulky and apprehensive, replied, "Bradley."

"And what is your first name?"

Unwillingly and slowly, "Charles."

"May I ask one other question—do you go to church?"

"No, I'm no church-goer."

Dr. Babcock then put his hand pleasantly on the clerk's shoulder, and said with enthusiasm, "Now, Charlie, I want you to come down to my church, Fifth avenue and Thirty-seventh street, next Sunday. I shall preach, and I shall be real glad to see you. I shall have an eye out for you."

The next Sunday "Charlie" came, with one or two of his friends, and the Sunday after that every clerk in the establishment came, and they continued to attend from that time.

But for the "love" which "is not easily pro-

voked," and which "seeketh not her own," such a result could not have been possible.

A large and beautiful life can never be lived selfishly. Neither the highest purity nor the highest happiness can ever be had except in the sunshiny atmosphere of unselfishness and service.

Edward Rowland Sill sings this message in his own clear way:

"My tower was grimly builded,
With many a bolt and bar,
'And here,' I thought, 'I will keep my life
From the bitter world afar.'

"Dark and chill was the floor,
Where never a sunbeam lay,
And the mold crept up on the dreary wall,
With its ghost touch, day by day.

"One morn, in my sullen musings,
A flutter and cry I heard;
And close to the dim and rusty casement
There clung a frightened bird.

"Then back I flung the shutter
That was never before undone,
And safely kept till its wings were rested
The little weary one.

"But in through the open window,
Which I had forgot to close,
There had burst a gush of cheery sunshine
And a summer scent of rose.

"For all the while I had burrowed
There in my dingy tower,
Lo! the birds had sung and the leaves had danced
From hour to sunny hour.

"And such balm and warmth and beauty
Came drifting in since then,
That the window still stands open wide,
And shall never be shut again."

I call you to God's stock exchange to-day. If it is a life full of worry and anxiety that is keeping your heart heavy, bringing the crow's-feet to your cheeks and causing your hair to turn grey, come and exchange your spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise. An old Indian woman, in describing her condition before she accepted Christ, said: "I was like a spool of thread that, becoming unravelled, had gotten so tangled up that nobody could straighten it. So I brought my tangled self to Jesus, and he loosed the knots and made the twisted threads straight." He can do the same for you. The tangled skein of your life may be beyond all your power to straighten out, but Jesus Christ can straighten it, and give you the oil of joy in the place of mourning.

It may be that you are interested in the Stock Exchange in Wall Street, but have been forgetful of the coin that passes current in God's spiritual exchange. You have been interested in bonds, and shares of stock, and other securities, but

you have forgotten about faith, and repentance, and pardon.

An earnest Christian worker was once traveling on a train, when he seized an opportunity to walk around among the passengers and distribute a pocket full of tracts. One of the passengers refused, and taking a race-card out of his pocket, held it up, saying, "You see this; that's my religion."

"Is it, my friend?"

"Yes," he replied.

"I suppose you have a good many of those cards?"

"Oh, yes, I have them pinned all over my mantelpiece."

"Well then, go on and collect as many more as you can; pin them all around your room, and when the doctor tells you that you have only ten minutes to live, take them all down, count them over, and see what your religion is worth."

They sat quiet, the one in silent prayer, the other in anxious thought. When the Christian man reached his station and had risen to leave the car, the man with the race-card said, "I say, you can give me one of those papers, if you will."

Sometimes I hear a man say that his lodge, or something of that sort, is his religion; and I wonder what his religion will be worth when it comes to the end.

I once heard a story that made a great impression

on me, as illustrating the peril of an insecure foundation for eternal hope: A man who was dying had led such a moral life that his neighbors thought that of course he would get to heaven. At last he came to his fatal illness and passed into a kind of trance just before he died. He regained consciousness after a time, however, but as his friends and neighbors bent over him it was no triumphant assurance that they heard, but the sad and terrible words, "I have missed it by just a little!" It is a terrible thing for a man to be struggling for riches all his life, and find at the last that his coin is worthless in the greatest stock exchange of all. That was what Jesus meant when he said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

III.

The Folly of Blowing Out God's Torch.

"Quench not the Spirit."—1 Thessalonians 5: 19.

THERE is no sublimer thought for any man than this: that the Spirit of Almighty God may dwell in him, enlightening him, convincing him of his duty, electrifying his will, energizing him for the great duties of life. This presence of the Spirit of God in the human heart is illustrated in many ways, but in none so frequently or effectively as by comparison with a fire or a light.

In the text we are brought face to face with a great and perilous fact, that is, the possibility of blowing out this torch which God has put into our hearts, so that we shall be left in darkness and lose all the enlightenment, all the glorious energy, all the saving power of the presence of God. As no other misfortune could be so terrible to us as this, let us study it with reverent and earnest hearts.

There are several places where we may quench the Spirit. First of all, we may quench the Spirit

in our own hearts. But it is also possible for us to quench the Spirit in other hearts. We may do this in many ways. We may destroy the power of the Holy Spirit to influence our neighbors or our friends by laughing at their convictions of duty, or sneering at their religion. This is often done. We may quench the Spirit in others through our own sinfulness of character. Our influence may be so baleful that it will put out the light of the Spirit in their hearts. We may also quench the Spirit which shines in the Bible, so that for us there will be no light there. Other men and women coming to the Scriptures will still find in them the light of life, but for us they will be dark. This is often done by people who use the Bible lightly and for ignoble purposes, robbing it in their thoughts of its sacred and holy character. For them its torch has gone out. We cannot be too careful, lest we blow out the torch which lights up God's word for our souls.

Let us study some of the ways in which we may quench the Spirit in ourselves. One way is by supporting that which we know to be wrong. There is a special woe pronounced in the Bible for the man who calls good "evil," and evil "good." It is a terrible thing to believe that a thing is wrong, and ought to be denounced as wrong, and yet, for the sake of some imaginary or real good for ourselves, to silence our conscience, and support it, and before the world call it "good." That is deliberately

quenching the Spirit. The Holy Spirit shining into our consciences says to us: "This is wrong." But we are false to the teaching of the Spirit, and so we blow out God's torch. How many men and women have driven themselves into the darkness that way!

We may quench the Spirit by uncharitable judgments of the people with whom we are associated. Have you never noticed the lowering of your religious temperature whenever you have permitted yourself to become censorious in your judgment of the motives of others? Charity is essential to the free presence of God's Spirit in our hearts. God is love, and he cannot live in an unloving heart. A yielding to angry temper is another way of quenching the Spirit very much like the last. Perhaps as many quench the Spirit in this way as in any other. Some people's religious life is a series of ups and downs, high hills and low valleys, mountain-top visions, followed by valleys that are filled with fearsome nightmares and haunting devils, because of the yielding again and again to an invasion of the demon of bad temper. Many grieve the Spirit of God, and many others finally quench the Spirit and are given over to the bondage of anger and hate, through yielding to evil temper.

Another method of quenching the Spirit akin to some of these I have mentioned, is by yielding to prejudices—the refusal to have an open mind. The stubbornness of good people is one of the saddest

chapters in all human experience. One could write volumes of stories telling of the sad havoc that has come through the mulishness, to use a Scriptural term which David set the example for, of people who, in the main, mean to be good and serve God, but who give themselves over to prejudices. Under the control of prejudice their eyes are blinded so that they cannot see. The Spirit is quenched.

There is no surer way to quench the Spirit than to do what conscience says is wrong. No matter who permits it. No matter if the whole world is doing the same thing. If the Spirit of God shining in your conscience says to you, "This is wrong!" then you must not do it. If you do, you blow out the torch, and will go stumbling along without light.

The indulgence of appetites and passion, so that the body with its lusts and desires comes to be master, and thought of its comfort comes before that of the culture of the soul, is a sure way of quenching the Spirit.

An absorption in business, or in worldly pleasure, so that your thought, and imagination, and care are taken up with the things of this world more than with those of the Spirit, will quench the Spirit. If we are to enjoy the presence of God, and our lives are to be made happy and strong through his light and guidance and support, then God must be first, and not second, in our devotion. One of the first great declarations God makes in claiming his

rulership over man is, "I thy God, am a jealous God."

A trifling spirit on our part will blow out God's torch in us. Many men are eaten with moths; they fritter away their power to think great thoughts and do great deeds. To be stirred by the Spirit of God with deep sympathy and compassion for the oppressed, or to be aroused to heroic fervor by some impassioned plea for a great cause; to have the Spirit of God show us a great opportunity to do, and dare, and sacrifice, and then to trifle with it, to wipe our tears, compose our spirits, and go our way as if nothing had happened, is a terrible thing. There is no surer way to quench the Spirit, to blow out the torch, and leave ourselves in darkness.

There are also negative ways by which men quench the Spirit. All one needs to do is to neglect prayer. A really spiritual life has never been lived without prayer. In the very nature of the case such a thing is impossible. If your Christian life comes to be less prayerful, you may be very sure that you are already grieving the Spirit of God. You have only to go on, praying less and less frequently, letting the thought of prayer and the need of prayer die out of your consciousness until you cease to pray, to quench the Spirit of God entirely in yourself. Prayer is the channel through which God keeps your soul freshened with the strength of heaven.

On the coast of Arabia, where there is almost no

rainfall, the natives find water in springs that burst forth at the bottom of the sea. At some points divers go down with goat-skin bottles under their arms, and fill them with water as it bursts out of the rock-bed of the ocean. In other places the springs of fresh water are so strong that when hollow bamboo poles are pushed down into them, the water rises through the tubes, and pours directly into vessels held by the boatmen. In this rushing life of ours, surrounded as we are by the salt sea of business, and struggling for our daily bread, we need to give ourselves often to secret prayer, God's most perfect channel through which the Water of Life, sweet and pure, may come to refresh our thirsty souls. The promise of Jesus that those who pray to him in secret shall be rewarded openly, still holds good, and its rich provisions are for you, as truly as for any saint who has ever profited by them in the past.

Another negative way by which men quench the Spirit is the neglect of religious conversation and fellowship. Coals are kept alive by keeping them together. If you want to deaden any coal in the grate, set it off by itself on the hearth. It will stop flaming almost at once; then it will smoke for a little while, and then blacken and die. So it is with our Christian experience: we need the fellowship of other Christians. As Frances Willard used to say, "Religion means together." We ought to talk much with each other about spiritual things. Not

to do it is a positive loss, and to fail entirely is to quench the Spirit of God. Next to prayer, there is no quicker way to kindle into a bright flame your torch of spiritual light and power than to converse, either privately with another Christian, or in the class-meeting or prayer-meeting, about the deep things of God.

The result of quenching the Spirit I have already suggested. It means that the light is taken from us, and we are left to sit in darkness. It means what it meant to Saul when he saw God going from him at the going of Samuel, leaving him in a world of silence with no God to speak to him. It is the greatest tragedy that can come to any man or woman, to quench the Spirit of God; to blow out the only torch that can light us safely through this world and happily into the next.

Dr. R. W. Clark tells how he once visited a young man who was sick and wished to see him. When Dr. Clark entered the room he was astonished to see so little sign of illness. He remarked on this astonishment. The young man replied, "I am not sick in my body, but in my soul. I am in deep distress." Being asked the cause of his distress, he said: "During the revival in our church, I have not only resisted its influence, but have made sport of the young converts; I have ridiculed those who were seeking the salvation of their souls, and I feel that I have committed an unpardonable sin, and that

there is no hope for me." Dr. Clark said to him, "Your sins are indeed fearfully great; but if you sincerely repent, and will now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will pardon you." He then referred to the Saviour's compassion on the thief on the cross, and to other cases that might awaken hope in his mind. But everything that was said failed to reach his case. His reply to every argument, or appeal, or passage of Scripture that was quoted was the same, "I have quenched the Spirit, there is no hope for me." And so it went on for days until he died in the depths of despair. Like Saul, he had driven God away. He had blown out the torch in his soul.

On the other hand, the results of yielding to the Spirit of God, and giving obedience to his light and guidance, are the most glorious that can come to any human being. Under such circumstances sin is consumed utterly from the soul. The imagination is cleansed; the heart becomes the abode of pure thoughts; the imagination becomes peopled with dreams of noble achievements for the blessing of others; a holy fervor is kindled in the soul, and there is about the nature and character so divinely inhabited a spiritual power to help and to bless men.

A scientific man of unquestionable authority, who has been engaged in a microscopic investigation of the gold-bearing river sands, says he observed that the thirteen-year-old daughter of his companion

had only to lay the flat of her hand on the sands, and particles of gold-dust would adhere to it. Every time she repeated the action her palm was almost covered with the gold-dust that continued to cling to it. Whenever she grasped a handful of sand, and would shake her hand, the sand would fall to the ground, but the flakes of gold would remain clinging to the palm. No other person in the company had that peculiar ability. This remarkable fact convinced the scientist that there is in nature a power whose influence in attracting gold is similar to that which magnetism exerts on iron; and this little girl possessed that power. The presence of the Spirit of God, having free course in a human heart and life, is like that. Jesus possessed this power supremely. Whoever he talked with, whether it was a blind beggar like Bartimæus, or an avaricious swindler like Zacchæus, or a madman like the demon-possessed slave of Gadara, or a poor vile woman like the one who gave him a drink at the well of Sychar, Christ brought to the surface at once any true gold in their characters. That which was bad in them fell away, as the sand fell from the little girl's hand, but the true gold of penitence and faith, the pledge of their childhood to God, clung to Christ's hand. We must have that same divine Spirit in us if we are to go among men and women doing Christ's work. Let us then not quench, but welcome, the Holy Spirit—by daily contact with the Bible, by con-

stant prayer and supplication, by Christian conversation, by thinking much upon the deep things of God, and through fellowship with Christ in the service of our fellow men. Thus let us guard the holy torch God has given us.

Mastery over other souls to compel their obedience to God can only come to us through the presence and power of the Spirit of God in us. Mr. A. J. Cassatt, President of the Pennsylvania Railway, was recently making a quiet tour over one of the branches of the system and wandered into an out-of-the-way switch-yard where something one of the yardmen was doing did not meet with his approbation. He made some suggestion to the man, who asked:

"Who are you that's trying to teach me my business?"

"I am an officer of the road," replied Mr. Cassatt.

"Let's see your switch-key, then," said the man, suspiciously.

Mr. Cassatt pulled from his hip-pocket his key-ring, to which was attached the switch-key, which no railroad man in service is ever without. It was sufficient proof for the switchman, who then did as he was told. O my brother, my sister, you that name the name of Jesus Christ, do you carry your spiritual "switch-key" with you into all the affairs of your daily life? To have controlling power for

good over the men with whom we deal in the counting-room and the market-place; to have a heavenly influence over the pleasure-seeking souls with whom we come in contact in social life; to lift up and summon for righteousness in God's name the people whom we meet, we must have the switch-key of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray with Charles Wesley:

"O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow,
Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow!

"Refining Fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.

"My steadfast soul, from falling free,
Shall then no longer move,
While Christ is all the world to me,
And all my heart is love."

IV.

Spunk and Spirituality.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."—Acts 4: 13.

MODERN Christians lack spunk. In our day the aggressive quality of the Christian faith is not sufficiently illustrated. Where Christianity is persecuted, and to be a Christian causes a man necessarily to take his life in his hand, so that he is in constant danger of being mobbed, or imprisoned, or killed, it greatly develops the spirit of boldness and aggression. Under such conditions, if a man does not believe in his religion with all his heart and soul, so that it becomes the supreme master, he throws it up and is done with it. But in a worldly, material age the danger does not come from open attack, but from a smothering process. True, a man is just as dead when he is smothered to death with a feather bed as when he is stoned to death, or burned at the stake. But the approaches are not so clear, and many a man is undergoing the smothering process without alarm.

We need to remind ourselves frequently of the sharp, clear cut antagonism between good and evil. We need to get something of Christ's meaning when he says, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." We need to get Paul's intensity of feeling when he declared that we must abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.

It is the aggressive spirit which challenges the attention of the world to the divine power of Jesus Christ to affect the lives of men. Peter and John could have lived tamely and whispered their message quietly under their breath among the people, and have attracted nobody's attention and turned no public gaze on Jesus. But because they spoke boldly, because with brave face, and earnest word, and positive conviction, they uttered their message everywhere, and wrought their cures publicly, giving all the glory to Christ, they challenged public attention. Men were compelled to stop and talk about them on the street, and declare that there must be something marvelous and wonderful about Jesus Christ, that he could take common, rude, unlearned men, and make such persuasive and powerful ministers of them for the extending of his name and cause. Now, it is just this that we need to-day. Our churches often halt because of their very respectability. They fit so perfectly, so harmoniously, so smoothly, into the life of the time, that they challenge nobody's attention. There is nothing

about them bold enough to make men stop excitedly in the street to discuss what the church says or stands for.

Now, this is all wrong. This is not an age in which the church of Jesus Christ ought to be as popular as it is. Jesus said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." It is not the duty of the Christian church to live meekly and tamely in the midst of the vices and crimes surrounding us in these great cities. It is a shame that the church arouses so little hatred, so little enmity, so little excited and aggressive opposition from liquor saloons and gambling hells and brothels and corrupt politicians, as it does to-day. It ought to be too hot for them to live in its neighborhood without being scorched into remorse or driven into the farther darkness. There is too much peace for the church to-day. The Christian church does not mean enough in the community. Christ could stand with flashing eye in the presence of the most respectable oppressors of the weak and say, "Ye are of your father, the devil!" Corrupt and crafty politicians went squirming from his presence, wringing their hands and gnashing their teeth and plotting to kill him. Modern Christianity needs some of that boldness, that spirit of the Divine Lord. Many of our great cities are outraged by crafty and corrupt men who live by blackmail, who levy taxes on permitted vice and crime, that they may grow rich off the plunder. The Chris-

tian church knows these things, and yet lives so meekly and tamely in the midst of it all that it seems a matter of no great importance. It is time for us to arouse ourselves. It is time for us to remember that the abhorrence of evil is a part of a righteous man's equipment as surely as is the spirit that cleaves to that which is good. Spunk in defense of righteousness, and in attack on evil, is the backbone of the man of spirituality.

Some people talk about spirituality as though it were a jelly-like moral quality with no vertebræ in it. There could be no greater mistake. If Christ was spiritual; if Paul was spiritual; if Peter and John were spiritual men; if Martin Luther and John Wesley deserved to be leaders of the spiritual hosts, then a vital, manly, aggressive indignation against evil and a bold defense of righteousness belong of right to the truly spiritual life. We need to make more of this type of spirituality. Then we shall show to the world that Christianity is something more than theory; something more than mere philosophy. If the modern church would only rise up *en masse* in city and state and nation to enforce by the power of public sentiment, through public discussion, through the press and the ballot-box, what is in our creeds and formal statements of belief, making them live, we would not only challenge the attention of mankind as never before, but we would mightily lift the burdens that are crushing the

weak, and start a revival of genuine religion that would capture millions of men and women to the Christ who had exhibited such power in us.

Mr. W. T. Moore, singing of the world's present need, concludes that the greatest need of mankind to-day is more spiritual muscle in its citizenship. He says:

"—our next great need is men—
Not little men, who have but little brains,
Not those who mainly live for sordid gains;
But men of largeness in the Church and State,
Men worthy to be called both good and great,
Men with clear heads, clean hearts, and stainless hands,
Whose sympathy with souls includes all lands,
Who live not in cold, lifeless, human creeds,
But find their highest joy in noble deeds.
These are the men this age calls to the front,
And these must bear the battle's fiercest brunt,
Until our selfish conflicts all shall cease,
And Love shall bring us universal peace.
Such men, with liberty to think and act,
Will soon make all our brightest dreamland fact,
Will stop all evil currents and secure
A righteousness which will all time endure."

A holy boldness, a certain loyalty to God which gives us the power to defy the world, is essential to the greatest success in winning men from their sins to God. Great soul winners have always been remarkable for that quality. Uncle John Vassar, who called himself "God's shepherd dog," and who brought back many a wandering lamb to the flock of his Master, was a man without any great ability

or education, but a man who, like Peter and John, associated with Jesus until he caught his implicit faith in goodness and became as bold in its defense. He went to the front in the Civil War, constantly praying and holding meetings with the soldiers. He made such a stir in one regiment that a certain General Ruger sent a soldier to summon Vassar to his presence. The soldier found him in a religious meeting. He went in and touched the evangelist on the shoulder and whispered to him that the general wanted to see him. Uncle John said, "Boys, go right on with the meeting; the general wants to see me." When he reached the general's tent, that officer asked him gruffly, "Who are you, and what are you here for? You are not the chaplain of either of these regiments. We shot a man as a spy who came into our camp as you have come to-day. By whose authority are you here?" Uncle John Vassar replied, "I am agent of the American Tract Society, and I have passes from President Lincoln through all the Army of the Potomac; and now, general, do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? We can have a little season of prayer right here." And in a brief time Uncle John was back with the boys in a rapturous prayer-meeting for the conversion of sinners and the comfort of Christian soldiers. On one occasion he was captured by the Southern troops and brought before the famous cavalry general, Stuart. When the general asked

him who he was, he replied, "I am John Vassar, the agent of the American Tract Society and the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ." "Oh, yes," said General Stuart, "I know that good old Society, and we need have no fear of one of its agents." "But, general," continued Uncle John, "do you know and love the Lord Jesus?" At this point one of the soldiers who was guarding him said, "I think, general, we had better send this man back across the lines, for, if we do not, we shall have a prayer-meeting from here to Richmond."

Vassar often won souls to God by the very boldness and daring of the attempt. He went into the Parker House, in Boston, one day, and saw in the parlor a very fashionably dressed woman. He went up to her boldly, and yet with the utmost deference and politeness, and asked if she loved Jesus. She was a worldly woman, who had been utterly indifferent to Christianity; but in five minutes, to her own astonishment, she was kneeling by his side in that hotel parlor, sobbing over her sins. When her husband came back a little while later she told him about it, and he angrily said, "Why didn't you send him about his business?" She answered, "Ah, my dear, if you had been here you would have thought he was about his business." May God enable us, every one who names the name of Jesus Christ, to show forth something of that same holy boldness that will make us soul winners wherever we go.

We need this same boldness of spirit to insure the safety of our own souls. We are assured in the Bible that we shall not keep our religious experience without a struggle. We are urged to put on the whole armor of God, because we shall have to wrestle with many enemies and many temptations. We are told that boldness on our part is an essential condition of victory. The devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but when bravely and boldly resisted, he flees away.

A good story is told of an honest old commodore in the American navy, who commanded a blockade squadron in Southern waters during the Civil War. A fine looking, well mannered man came to him one day, at a time when no vessels had been able to pass the blockade for weeks, and introduced himself as the representative of certain firms abroad whose commercial need for cotton was desperate. After explaining this point fully, he made an open offer to the commodore of fifty thousand dollars if he would manage to let one single ship laden with cotton pass the blockade. He even opened his wallet, and spread the crisp bills out upon the table to emphasize the amount.

The commodore listened with an indifferent air, and said nothing until the man was through with his offer. Then he answered, still indifferently, "The thing is absolutely impossible, sir. Good morning," and he bowed him out. So little indigna-

tion had he shown that, a week later, the persevering agent came back with a new offer. "Commodore," he said, "I am authorized to offer you even more than I did. If you will do as I ask, here are one hundred thousand dollars which I will leave upon the table;" and he began to take a roll of bills out of his wallet as before.

This time, however, the old sailor was not indifferent. His brow darkened and his eye flashed lightning as, leaping forward, he seized the briber by the neck and kicked him out of his cabin, shouting as he did so, "Get out of here, you scoundrel! You are coming too near my price!" Any man may be sure that if he dallies with the tempter, and is indifferent, and does not resist him with boldness, the enemy of souls will make offers again and again, until he gets inside his armor. The way of safety is the way of bold and open antagonism to evil.

I am sure that some are staying away from Jesus, and from open fellowship with him, simply because they are cowed by the enemy, and lack the courage to make just one bold effort to break their bondage and come to Christ. I wish I knew how to speak the right word to some soul that needs but just a little to bring it inside the door of the kingdom. I was reading somebody's description the other day of that scene of Paul before Agrippa. The writer said that Agrippa was no doubt entirely honest and sincere when, in a sudden moment of deep feeling,

he exclaimed to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!" He thought Paul and Agrippa were very near to shaking hands before Festus and all the court at that moment; so near, that their failure to do so on the spot makes that one of the most tragical moments in all the world. A tragical moment only second to the one you will have now if you feel what Agrippa felt, and say what Agrippa said, and then go away and do what Agrippa did. "Almost" is surely the most tragic word that is ever heard uttered on earth or in hell. And yet both earth and hell are full of it. Almost! Almost! Almost! An athlete runs for the prize, and he almost touches the winning post. A marksman shoots at the target, and he almost hits it. A runner leaps for his life over a roaring flood, and he almost clears the chasm. A ship is almost within the harbor when a storm suddenly strikes her. The five foolish virgins were almost in time. Almost! Agrippa was almost a Christian and a hero of the faith. And so it is with many another. You, perhaps, are almost a Christian, almost ready to step over the line in open discipleship to Christ. But will you? Or will you lose the race? Will you miss the target? Will you fail in the leap, and be caught in the swirl of the torrent that sweeps you down? At the very gate of the harbor shall you be driven back to sea and lost? It is for you to say.

V.

The Life that will Stand a Thousand Years.*

"Your life is hid with Christ in God."—Colossians 3: 3.

A THOUSAND years ago a life was closed in England that has been a marvelous influence for good on the English-speaking race, and through that race on all mankind. It has been a thousand years since Alfred, whom we call the Great King, and with reason, ceased to walk with men upon the earth, and yet he was never so alive, never so powerful in those streams of influence he set in motion, as to-day. In a peculiar sense he was the creator of the Anglo-Saxon race. It is thus appropriate to recall to the mind of the present generation the characteristics of that splendid figure who stood at the beginning of the great English-speaking institutions which we know to-day.

I have neither the time nor the disposition to give a biographical sketch of King Alfred. It is

* Preached in memory of King Alfred the Great, Sunday, October 27, 1901.

rather my purpose to call attention to those great and striking elements of character which have given this man a thousand years of ever increasing power in the world, after he has gone forth from it. There is in every wholesome, healthy nature the desire to make its mark upon its time; to do something that will be so helpful to humanity that its influence will last after the man himself has ceased to live among men. Here is a man who has lived a thousand years and has grown greater in the race. Surely it cannot but be interesting and profitable for us to study the traits of character which suggest the secret of that earthly immortality.

There are three things that stand out for me in the life of King Alfred that seem worthy of our earnest study. Without either of them he could never have been the man he was, nor could he have lived to this day with the growing influence he has in the world. The first of these is his *hardihood* and *endurance*. He had the soul of a wrestler. His ambition for himself, his ideal of life, was not self-indulgence, not ease, but ceaseless struggle and effort for achievement. He says himself, "No wise man should desire a soft life, if he careth for any worship here of the world, or for eternal life after this life is ended." Alfred felt that for a man to be really great, either here or hereafter, he must win his greatness at the price of great struggle; he must not fear to give and take hard knocks; he must get

strength through great toil and exercise; his shoulders must broaden under heavy burdens; his intellect must develop and strengthen under the pressure of severe problems; and it was to this kind of a life that he gave himself. It was a life full of daring; courageous, arduous, and patient.

The stories that have come down to us through the thousand years of English history show us that King Alfred was a man who was irrepressible by defeat, a man whom no humiliation could thwart or turn from his purpose. During all the early years of Alfred's time England was beset and harassed and ofttimes overrun by the Danes. On one occasion, while Alfred was residing at Chippenham, on the River Avon, Guthrum, a Danish leader, attacked this town at night in the middle of winter, and the king had to flee for his life. He wandered through the country for some time in disguise. It is related by the chroniclers of that day that the king sought shelter in the house of a swineherd. The wife of his humble host, being engaged in her homely duties, requested the stranger to turn some cakes, which she was baking, to prevent their burning. The thoughts of Alfred were far away, considering the best means of defeating his enemies. The cakes were burned, and the woman, on discovering his neglect, soundly berated her guest, and slapped his jaws, saying that he would be glad enough to eat the cakes, but was too lazy to turn them.

Alfred bore it with meekness, sustained by his devotion to his greater purpose.

On another occasion, in the disguise of a harper, he boldly visited the camp of this same Danish leader, Guthrum. His enemies were captivated with his music and kept him there for several days, during which time he overheard them discussing their plans of further attack on the Saxons. Quietly leaving their camp, he joined his friends. An army was quickly gotten together, and, marching against the Danes, with the knowledge he had gained while among them, a great battle was fought, in which he was completely victorious.

These are but suggestive incidents which show the character of the man. Like our own Washington, to whom King Alfred has been compared, an enemy had no reason to rejoice because he had defeated him once, or twice, or thrice; for so long as Alfred lived, his courage and resources caused him to be counted as a worthy foe. I am sure that it is important in our own day to make much of this trait of hardihood and endurance. Only the other day, in New York city, a man went into court protesting against the reservation of two thousand dollars from his income of six thousand dollars a year, from an estate left him by his father, his creditors desiring that this amount be paid annually on his debts. That protest was a very remarkable paper. In it this man stated that he had been brought up in idle-

ness; that his father had never taught him any trade or profession; neither had he disciplined him in habits of industry, nor given him any knowledge of business. Instead, his childhood and youth and young manhood had been indolent and self-indulgent, and his father had supplied him with abundant means for a wasteful and extravagant life. In consequence, he averred that it was not possible for him to live on four thousand dollars a year, supporting a wife and child, and begged the court not to thrust him into new debts by holding back two thousand dollars a year to pay to his old creditors.

Surely, nothing could more clearly illustrate our theme. It is not only folly, it is a sin and a shame and a moral crime against society to bring up children like that. Such people are the worst kind of paupers. No parent can do a greater wrong to his children than to bring boys or girls up to manhood or womanhood with no self-reliance, with no just idea of the true purpose of human life, with no sense of responsibility for the life which they live, and with no capability of making an adequate return for what they receive from the world. The young man who stands at twenty-five, strong-bodied, clear-headed, well educated, with good morals, and a clean, wholesome conscience, ready to take hold of the work of life with self-relying energy, trusting in God and his own right arm, backed by his own common sense, is a rich man compared with him who stands soft

and mushy and helpless, a thing to be petted and coddled and fussed over, and with no head for anything, even though he have an income of many thousands of dollars a year. Let us have a generation of young men and young women who have a contempt for a life of ease and self-indulgence, and who have a self-reliance, a love for achievement through struggle, an enthusiasm for daring and hard work such as animated King Alfred, and animates to-day our own President Roosevelt, and we shall have a nation born anew, and shall rise to a new epoch in national greatness.

Our next thought about King Alfred is his love of knowledge, and his thorough devotion to personal culture. After he had gained his final victories over the Danes, he gave every spare hour of his life to the development of his own mind and heart, and to the encouragement of education and culture among his people. Knowledge, to King Alfred, was never a matter of mere personal comfort and enjoyment. He sought it, first of all, because he was hungry for it, but with the distinct purpose to convey the knowledge acquired to his people. He sent intelligent men to Russia, to Jerusalem, and even, it is said, to India, to obtain geographical and other learning. When you remember that this was many hundreds of years before the invention of steam, and that travel was slow and uncertain and dangerous, it will be hard to match such enterprise in modern scientific ex-

peditions. King Alfred's court was the home of many distinguished scholars. He was the founder of Oxford University, which began its glorious history in the year 886. The first law in the world—except among the early Hebrews, who received it directly from God—demanding the compulsory education of children, was promulgated by King Alfred, who compelled the nobles to have their children educated, he himself providing books for their instruction. King Alfred himself translated into Saxon "Æsop's Fables," Bede's "Latin History of the Anglo-Saxon Church," and the Psalms.

King Alfred's great friend, Bishop Asser, tells us that Alfred measured the time by candles, so as not to neglect any of his duties. These candles were made all of one length, burning one inch in twenty minutes. He divided his day into three parts—one to business of state, a second eight hours to the pursuit of knowledge and religious exercises, and a third to sleep, meals, and recreation. We need always to lay emphasis on personal culture. The temptation is ever with us to ease up on hard study and that serious mental work which gives fruitful and worthy results in the development of the mind. The human mind is like the farmer's soil. I go up through the country in the summer time and I see two farms lying side by side. They are of the same general quality; the character of the soil is the same; one is naturally about as productive as the

other. But one field will yield three tons of hay to the acre, while the farm adjoining it rarely yields as much as one ton. One man lives in comfort, and his farm is supporting his family splendidly and giving him something to lay up for old age; while the other is almost starving on a farm which has just as good capabilities as his neighbor's. You know what makes the difference. One man works his farm; he studies to know how best to cultivate it; he brings to it the kind of culture and the sort of fertilizer that will make it do its best work, and it responds in abundant harvests. The other works his farm in a shiftless sort of a way; things go from hand to mouth, and there is no systematic, faithful attempt to make the farm do its best.

So it is that men deal with their intellectual farms. God never yet gave a man an intellectual field so rich and fruitful that it did not need earnest and honest cultivation to bring forth its best harvests for the blessing of humanity. It ought to be a great ambition with us to make the best of our minds: to compel ourselves to some plan of personal culture that will keep us in fellowship with the best books, the loftiest minds, and the noblest thinking, not only of our own time, but of the years that are gone. The busiest of us may get a chance every week, and every day, to take at least our cup of cold water from those great living springs of mental vigor that are the tonics which will keep the intellectual life strong

and buoyant. In this day, when we make so much of specialists; when a man is not merely a doctor, but an eye doctor, or an ear doctor, or a throat doctor only; when a man is not simply a lawyer, but is so subdivided that he is only a patent lawyer, or a criminal lawyer, or a real-estate lawyer; in this day when, as never before, men are specializing themselves, and pouring all the water of their energies down the one flume, to turn the one wheel that is to give power to their specialty, we need to recall the great truth that we must be something more than bright and sharp and acute in the one thing we do to make a living. The doctor must be more than a doctor. The lawyer must be more than a lawyer. The preacher must be more than a preacher. The merchant must be more than a merchant. The teacher must be more than a teacher. The railroad man must be more than a master of trains. This very specializing of life makes it important that we should all hold ourselves to such a devotion to knowledge, to such a culture of wider wisdom than that which is needed to use in earning our bread, that we shall have an overflow of intellectual vigor —a flowering of cultured, cultivated manhood and womanhood, so that, like Joseph's bough, it shall run over the wall to bless the world outside and beyond ourselves.

But I have left the greatest until the last. For, after all, the supreme characteristic of King Alfred,

that alone which made it possible for him to do the great deeds he did, and leave the world such a heritage from his labors, was the fact of his genuine personal piety. Back of his hardihood and endurance; back of his courageous willingness to struggle and fight for the thing that was good; back of his love of books and culture, was the fact that he was a good man to his heart's core, that he loved God sincerely, and that he trusted in God with a faith as simple and sweet as a child's. Listen to these great words:

"Those men," said Alfred, "are the freest from care, whether about the anxieties of this life or of the next, who are fast in God; but in whatever degree they are asunder from God, in the same degree are they worried and harassed, both in mind and in body." In that sentence you have the great secret of King Alfred's life. He was "Fast in God." Dwelling in that fastness, holding hidden communion with his Divine Lord, he welded together a kingdom which has grown into the great England of to-day, and the institutions he founded have, like a mighty intellectual and moral banyan-tree, bent their branches to the earth, running roots under the sea, to come up not only in the United States and in Canada, but in Australia and India, and on all the islands of the sea which have felt the touch of English institutions. O my friends, if you would build a life that will stand a thousand years, you must drill it deep down in the Rock of Ages. It must

stand upon the foundation of goodness. The life that is "hid with Christ in God" is the life that no earthly storm can ever overturn. In the glitter and fascination of worldly success it often seems to us that wealth and fame and pleasure outshine the plain, simple graces of the good. But when the momentary glamour has disappeared we know that it is not so. We know that to be good is infinitely better than to be famous, or rich, or gay. Our lives must be built upon the foundation of goodness. Here is the first requisite; all other things are second. Obey God here at the beginning, and God will give you the best things all the way through for your career. Christ has given us his eternal pledge for that. Down through the ages comes his ringing promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

And may God give us the humility and wisdom to learn the great lessons King Alfred has to teach us! Then what the poet wishes for the great leaders of national life may come with no less potent influence to us in our own struggle:

"Such was he: his work is done;
But, while the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure."

VI.

The King's Insurance Company.

"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."—Psalm 84: 11.

Not another insurance company in the world will offer a policy like that. If you go to the different companies, you will find that they have a great many tempting propositions to meet the varying needs and tastes of mankind; but you will not find an agent who will offer to sell a policy to supply all human needs and give every good thing that a man may require. That is a policy you cannot buy of this world's insurance companies at any price. But God has an insurance company, and through his infinite grace and mercy I am one of his agents. And I want to recall your attention to the gracious provisions offered by this company, the headquarters of which are in heaven, but which is doing an ever-increasing business on earth.

One of the first exploits of a big business corporation is the amount of its paid-up capital. Well, I am willing to talk about that. The president of this company is the King of kings, and all the resources

of him who made the heavens and the earth are back of every policy issued. He who stored away all the gold in the mountains, who planted all the diamonds in South Africa, who owns the flocks upon a thousand hills—his wealth is all staked to guarantee the proposition set forth in the policy which is issued to the Christian. It is impossible to compute the paid-up capital. Paul was only able to sum it up by saying that the riches of God in Christ Jesus were unsearchable.

Another important item in an insurance company is that it shall be able to show good assets. There is no doubt at this point with the King's Insurance Company. All the riches of God are abiding and certain. There is no wildcat currency in the treasury of heaven. Business is done there in "gold tried in the fire," and its securities are not of the kind that "fade away." The liabilities of this insurance company are very large, because they comprise all the needs and longings of the human heart; but the assets are abundant to meet these needs. I notice that all insurance companies are glad to show a large surplus over liabilities. But there are none that can show such a surplus as can the agents of the King's Insurance Company. Paul declares that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Again he says, "My God shall supply all your need." And again, "We know that all things work together for good to them that

love God." And still again he says that we as Christians are "more than conquerors through him that loved us." All these expressions indicate the magnitude of the surplus over liabilities.

The conditions of this policy are very simple: They are repentance and faith. The same conditions are extended to all, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, high or low. There is one simple, straightforward proposition which requires "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

I want to call your attention to some of the special reasons why, in addition to any other insurance you may carry—whether it be fire insurance, or accident insurance, or endowment or life insurance—you still have exactly the same reason for insuring in this company. The King's Insurance Company is not in any sense a competitor with the other companies, for whatever insurance you may carry in the others, you have the same need for insuring here.

And first, this is the oldest insurance company in the world, and has been in successful operation for nearly six thousand years on this globe. Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and Caleb, and David, and Elijah, and Elisha, and Isaiah, and Daniel were all conspicuous and notable policy-holders, who took great interest in calling the world's attention to this company.

Again, the King's company is the only one that insures against the loss by fire in the great conflagration on the Judgment Day. No other company will listen to you in an appeal for a policy having that guarantee. But the King's Insurance Company pledges itself with all the wealth and power of its great treasury to protect you when the world is on fire.

Also, this is the only company that does business in insuring against wreckage on the River of Death. Many marine insurance companies will insure against wreckage in crossing the Atlantic or Pacific oceans, but these all fight shy of business connected with traffic on that dread river from which no traveler returns. But the King's Insurance Company has no hesitation. David, who was a joyous policyholder, comforted himself frequently by recalling the terms of his policy: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

In the fourth place, this is the only company that pays a daily indemnity, and often an hourly indemnity. It is also the only company that pays an indemnity in health as well as in sickness, and charges nothing extra in either case. The shut-in Christian gets his rich compensation and support from the King's treasury, but he also has benefits when he recovers and goes abroad, and in

addition to large wages, has constant daily benefits which cause his cup to run over with gratitude and thanksgiving.

There are a great many other important characteristics about this company. Its policies never run out so long as we abide by the conditions. I have known a great many men who had insured largely in other companies, who, when they grew old or fell ill, and were unable to earn the premiums required, were compelled to let their insurance lapse. But no policy ever yet lapsed in the King's Insurance Company, except through the wilful fault of the policy-holder. Christ pays the price of the policy for us. What we do is to accept it by repentance and faith. And though we may fall ill and be sick and weak, or may grow old and feeble, we shall lose none of our insurance that way. The great loving Christ keeps the policy paid up, so long as our hearts are obedient to him.

I have been in two or three insurance companies which seemed sound when I went in, but after a few years the transfer of management into unsafe hands finally wrecked the company, and I have lost many hundreds of dollars in that way. But no man will ever lose by change of management in the King's Insurance Company. The management will never change. It is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

The policy itself is a beautiful thing. There never

was any earthly engraver able to prepare so magnificent a policy as this. The portrait of the "One altogether lovely" is stamped on it, and the policy and portrait are set in the thoughts and imaginations and affections of the policy-holder, so that he may keep his eyes on it and find comfort in it in every time of discouragement and trial.

Sometimes a man hides his policy, or is led away and forgets it, and does not appreciate its worth. Dr. Wayland Hoyt tells the story of a man who had in his trunk a bundle of bonds. His father had brought them from a distant part of the country, and had told the son that the bonds were valuable and would be paid at maturity. Soon after the father died. The son took one of these bonds to a village banker. But the banker refused to negotiate it, saying that he knew nothing about it; a great many bonds were valueless; these might be. So this son and heir let the bonds lie in his trunk for years. He was poor. He often had a hard struggle to get on. But he had so little belief in the value of the bonds that he never again tried to use them. But one day the son had a visitor from the State in which the bonds were issued. Simply as a matter of curiosity, the son showed the visitor the bonds. The moment the stranger saw them he exclaimed, "Why, man, they are worth their face and all the accumulated interest in gold. Send them to New Orleans and they will be paid." It was even so. By way of ex-

periment, one of the bonds was sent to New Orleans, and the proceeds came back by return mail. Then the man sat down and counted his bonds, and found himself possessed of ten thousand dollars. Poor he had all the time thought himself, yet, all the time, he really was possessed of a very comfortable sum.

It is a sad thing that some people who have been policy-holders in the King's Insurance Company in a nominal way, have not yet come to appreciate their privileges in drawing daily benefits to gladden every hour of life. They feel that sometime, when they are very ill and are ready to die, or at the judgment, the policy in the King's company may be worth having; but their thoughts about it are very vague and indefinite. They are much like the young fellow who kept his father's bonds. He had a vague feeling that they might be of value some time, but got very little present comfort out of it. But how different it was when he knew that he might cash them, and get gold to live on now. So, infinite treasures of joy are open to many who are only nominal Christians, if they would but put forth their hands and draw with reverent faith the daily benefits guaranteed in their policy. Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians, speaking of Jesus, "In whom we have redemption"—not will have at some future time, at death, or the judgment. No, it is infinitely more real and present than that—"In whom

we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

There is a remarkable thing about this company—all its policy-holders speak well of it. Many a man has said to me about certain insurance companies, "I am greatly disappointed with my policy, but I am going to stay in the company because I have already put so much in I cannot afford to lose it." They do not stay with the company because they like it, or because they think it has done well by them, but because they lose less to stay with it than to get out. But the policy-holders in the King's Insurance Company never talk that way. Here is one company all of whose policy-holders speak well of it. See what Moses says about it after forty years of trial in the wilderness. He calls the people before him, and emphasizes the fact that God has fulfilled their policy to the very letter. I can see him with his great patriarchal beard, white as snow, as he shouts in the ears of the multitude, "And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went * * * who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and in a cloud by day."

After Moses was dead, God gave Joshua a wonderful policy. It had some strong provisions in it.

"As I was with Moses," said God, "so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Well, the wonderful years of battle and struggle went on, and the time came when Joshua was to deliver up his stewardship. In a remarkable address he reviewed the story of his career and of God's dealing. Beloved by all, the venerable man gave his testimony to God's fulfillment of that insurance policy. He said: "I am old and stricken in age: and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. * * * And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

And that is the way they all talk. David never could say enough concerning the way the Lord fulfilled his promises. And the author of the Psalm from which our text is taken has just been looking over his policy again until his heart is so full of thanksgiving that it runs over, and he cries out, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from

them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee."

If you come down to the New Testament times, you will find the policy-holders just as enthusiastic. Hear Peter exclaiming, "Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Peter was an impulsive fellow, and what a black eye he would have given a company that had failed to live up to its promises! But, writing to his friends, he rejoices with them in the policy that has come to them through his agency; and speaking to them of Jesus, he says, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Hear Paul in his last love-letter to Timothy, as he sums up the results of his policy: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

And since the days of the early apostles and mar-

tyrs the world has been filling with policy-holders of the King's Insurance Company, who have borne glad testimony that it gives richer returns than the human heart is able to understand, or even to ask or think in advance. What sweet words the poets and hymn writers have had to say about their policy in the King's company! Madame Guyon sang—

"My Lord, how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment!
Where'er I dwell, I dwell with thee,
In heaven, in earth, or on the sea.
To me remains nor place nor time;
My country is in every clime:
I can be calm and free from care
On any shore, since God is there."

Hear Charles Wesley's exulting words:

"'Tis Love! 'tis Love! thou diedst for me!
I hear thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Pure, universal love thou art:
To me, to all, thy bowels move;
Thy nature and thy name is Love.
* * * * * * *
"I know thee, Saviour, who thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;
Nor wilt thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end:
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy nature and thy name is Love."

Only one thing more, and that is, if you are not

insured, you may be to-day. The Company will receive you. Paul says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Jesus himself says that he "came to seek and to save that which was lost." He also says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You may come just as you are. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is the free gift of God, and you must make application at the throne of mercy to the King of kings himself. He has promised that if you will put in your application in the name of Jesus Christ, who bore our sins in his own body on the cross, he will never refuse you. "Now is the accepted time." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," and all the other things of life that are good for you to have will be added unto it. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the guarantee of our text shall not fail: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

VII.

The Flint-Face of Jesus.

"Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."—Isaiah 50: 7.

"He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem."—Luke 9: 51.

Oliver Cromwell's men had a habit, just before the battle, of watching the face of their general, and then, with a feeling of awe and sublimity, they would whisper to each other, "See, he has on his battle face." When they saw that set, iron face, in which determination reigned supreme, they felt that defeat was impossible. Decision of character is one of the greatest forces among men. The Bible declares that not even God can do anything for a man who is "unstable as water." The man who makes up his mind, who sets his will at work, who determines on a course of action and then follows it as the day-star of his hope and life unto the end —he is the man who conquers.

I have chosen this prophecy concerning Jesus, and the record of its fulfillment, as a theme for our study because it embodies a great lesson which we need to learn. We are likely to think about Jesus only on

the side of the tenderness of heart and mercifulness of conduct which characterized his great mission. We are in danger of forgetting that in carrying out his love and mercy, it was essential that he should bring into action the noblest courage and the most invincible determination that have ever been exhibited by man. In forgetting this, we are likely to forget its essential importance to ourselves. When we think of Christian qualities we are prone to put the emphasis, as we should, upon kindness and mercy; but we must not forget that to carry out a life of kindness and mercy requires often the flint-face—the face set to go forward, and held there by a will that, under God's grace and help, will not bend or break.

It will help us, I think, to remember that Jesus always had this flint, set face when he was facing duty which meant discomfort and hardship. He never excused himself from going on the lonely, hard path. If he had an uncomfortable duty to do, he set his face relentlessly toward it. He never hid from himself the cross that was before him, and it is very unwise for us to do so. Courage is never obtained by shutting your eyes so that you may not see the danger before you. True courage comes from knowing and estimating the danger, and then facing it with honest, manly purpose. It is foolish for us to shut our eyes to the fact of the coming death and judgment that is before every one of us.

Rather is it wise and brave that we fit ourselves to meet them with joyous face.

Chevalier Gerard de Kampais was a very rich as well as a very proud man. He built a magnificent castle, and when it was opened had a great reception, and all the rich and noble among his neighbors were invited to the banquet. At the conclusion of the sumptuous feast, his guests made speech after speech, in which the chevalier, their host, was lauded to the skies, and was told that he was the most fortunate man alive. As the chevalier loved flattery, he was delighted with these addresses.

One among the guests, however, was a different type of man. After all the rest had spoken, he quietly arose and uttered a very singular observation: " Sir Knight, in order that your felicity should be complete, you require but one thing; but this is a very important item."

" And what thing is that? " demanded the knight, opening wide his eyes.

" One of your doors must be walled up," replied his guest.

At this strange rejoinder several of the guests began to laugh, and the expression on Chevalier Gerard's face seemed to say," This man has gone mad." Wishing, however, to have the clue to this enigma, he continued, " But what door do you mean? "

" I mean that through which you will one day be carried to your grave," replied the other.

The words of wisdom struck home to the hearts of both guests and host, and the proud knight was caused by them to reflect most seriously. They made him remember the vanity of all earthly things, and henceforth he set his face toward a noble and generous life. He no longer thought only of the perishable treasure in which he had once gloried, but made such good use of his riches that he came to the end of his life in great peace, blessing and blessed by all who knew him.

It is not possible for us to set our faces toward death and eternity with peace unless we have a right idea of God. Jesus thought of death as going to the Father, and if we have that thought of God, it will rob death of its terrors.

A king was once sitting with his warriors round the fire in a dark barn. It was night and winter. Suddenly a little bird flew in at an open door, and flew out again at another. The king said, "This bird is like man in the world; it flew in from darkness, and out again to darkness, and was not long in the warmth and light." To which one of his oldest warriors replied, "King, even in the dark the bird is not lost, but finds its nest." Neither shall we be lost in the dark if our faces are set toward our Heavenly Father, who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all. Then we shall be able to say, as did Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

A traveling man who had to be away from home a great deal, would often send his wife a message saying on what train she could expect him, and often would put in a little word for his boy Arthur, sometimes saying, "Tell Arthur I shall sleep with him to-night." But one day when the father was away from home, little Arthur lay hot and feverish in his mother's arms, sick unto death. "Don't ky, mamma," he said, "I shall seep wiv Dod, 'oo know. Send a teledraf to heaven, and tell Dod I sall seep wiv him to-night." The child had the right idea of God, and it is easy to set our faces toward the future, if we feel sure that the Father-God is our own, and will be with us under all circumstances.

Christ set his face toward the cross and went steadfastly toward it, not with any feeling of stoicism, to endure suffering with his teeth gritted because he could not help himself, but buoyantly and cheerfully, because of the supreme love that had caused him to make up his mind to give himself as a ransom for sinners. I think modern preaching does not emphasize this great fact as much as it ought; for, after all, we have no Gospel to preach that does not cluster about the atonement made by Jesus Christ on the cross. I think we do not let it stay in our imagination and arouse our gratitude and inspire our love as frequently as it would be good for us to do. There is nothing to which we can

really compare the marvelous love of Jesus in dying to redeem us from our sins.

An English clergyman was once preaching to a congregation of young people. During the discourse he narrated the story of a Russian nobleman who, with his wife and child, was driving through a forest. Soon they became aware by the frantic way in which the horses struggled and strained at the traces as they sped along at a furious pace, that the animals feared some calamity. As the frightened steeds tore through a ravine and up a high hill, those in the carriage looked back fearfully and across the white fields of snow on the hill they had left, they saw a black moving mass, and knew that a pack of ferocious wolves was following them. Every nerve was strained to reach the village, still a few miles distant; but the wolves drew nearer and nearer, and at last the coachman cut away the traces and set two of the leaders free, just as the wolves were approaching. The hungry pack diverted its attention from the carriage to the unfortunate horses thus set free. They were speedily torn in pieces, and then, with their appetites whetted, the wolves continued their pursuit in full cry after the carriage, now some distance ahead. The coachman again felt the wolves approaching, but he could not sacrifice the two remaining horses. So he nobly volunteered to sacrifice himself, and imploring his master to take his place on the box as the only hope of saving his

wife and daughter, the devoted servant descended and stood in the middle of the road, attempting vainly, as he well knew, revolver in hand, to bar the progress of the pack. The carriage dashed into the village. The nobleman sallied forth at once with a crowd of armed villagers in quest of the noble-hearted servant, whose voluntary sacrifice had saved three precious lives; but after beating back the wolves they found, as they had feared, that he had paid the price of his life for his devotion. "Now," said the clergyman, pointedly addressing his hearers, "was that man's devotion equal to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ?" A young lady in the audience, carried away with rapt interest in the story, answered clearly, "No, sir."

"Why not?" said the preacher.

"Because," replied the young girl, "that man died for his friends, but the Lord Jesus died for his enemies."

So Paul says, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

Now I have called your attention to this theme not only to refresh our gratitude and thanksgiving —though I want to do that in my own heart as well as in yours—but also to reveal the determination and the set purpose which we should have in going forth to face the duties of our lives. We ought not

to be turned aside by little things. We ought not to easily excuse ourselves from doing Christian duty. If Christ had been easily turned aside from his purpose, we should have been lost without remedy. As he set his face like a flint toward the cross where he was to die for us, so let us set our faces like a flint toward our cross, by bearing which, or by being crucified upon which, we may bring our fellow men to Christ.

How quick was the ear of Jesus to hear the cry, or see the need, of those who were unsaved! When he had steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that the time had come when he was to make his great sacrifice, his ear was still tender and sensitive to every cry of need. Poor old blind Bartimæus, only an unknown beggar, heard he was going by, and cried out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" and it was enough to stop Jesus. He called the man to him and gave him his sight, and, more than that, gave him a vision of God and a heart full of praise, and started him on a new life with songs of thanksgiving in his soul. No earthly kingdom could have made Jesus stop or turn aside, but the cry of a blind beggar who needed his help could do it. Ah, that was in line with the very purpose of his mission!

A little later on that same journey he is passing through Jericho, and little Zacchæus, the hated tax-collector, has climbed up on a limb of a big tree, and

sits there watching, with a great loneliness in his heart and a great hunger in his soul. Zacchæus has lived long enough to find out that money will not buy the most important things, and that mean deed after it is done is not done with, but has a way of coming back through the memory and the conscience and lashing the soul into terror. So Zacchæus sits there, hated and lonely and bitter-hearted, almost hopeless, and Jesus walks under the tree, and, looking up, sees through the eyes of Zacchæus into his very soul. And the Master tells him to come down and take him to dinner. And so Zacchæus leads the Christ home with him, and Jesus stops on his way to the cross to purge the hell out of this man's heart and home, and to leave a sun-burst of heaven in it. But you will notice that it was in the line of Christ's work to do that. There was not a man in Palestine rich enough, or great enough, to persuade Christ to go to a dinner just for display or show. He went home with Zacchæus to save him.

Oh, my friends, shall we not catch the spirit of the Son of God? Life is passing for us. The time is speedily coming when we must give an account of our stewardship. The youngest life here will soon be like a tale that is told, and some of us are at the very gate of eternity. Is it not time for us to set our faces like a flint, steadfastly, toward doing our duty, toward carrying the Gospel to our neighbors, toward reaching out our hands and our hearts to the

weak and the ignorant, the poor and the sinful, and seeking in Christ's stead to reconcile them to God? Too often we have been turned away from our purpose, and have let the great interests of our lives suffer that we might make more money, or have more frivolity, or greater luxury of the flesh. But in God's name let us repent of that, and set our faces once and for all toward the great purpose of human living. The fields are white for the harvest. The need of consecrated, self-denying, devoted men and women to help sweeten the sorrows of the broken-hearted, to carry the burdens of the weak, to bring the hope of heaven to the hopeless, is very great. Shall we not now give Christ first ourselves, and then whatever of talent, and money, and strength he has committed to our hands?

VIII.

Strong Hearts.

"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God."—1 Thessalonians 3: 12, 13.

Not long ago I was coming up from the South with a conductor, who told me of a recent experience he had had bringing his train over the same route one cold night. He said that the engineer began to lose time and kept losing it. He complained that he could not keep up steam. The fireman worked with all his might, but gradually the fire died down on their hands, and finally went out entirely, so that there was not steam enough to draw the train. There was a long delay, and everybody suffered inconvenience and discomfort.

The human heart is the locomotive of life. So long as the heart keeps true and strong, with plenty of the steam of courage and hope, no man is really defeated, and everything that is good enough to be true in a human life may be possible. But when the heart faints, and the inner fires of the soul begin to die down, nothing can really help that does

not start a new fire in the soul. A dead engine must go to the roundhouse, have all the ashes and clinkers taken out, and a new fire built; then it may start on a new journey with better success. The same is true of life. A clear head, a strong body, and all outward surroundings propitious, are of no avail unless there be a strong, brave heart, true and pure in its unselfish love for God and man.

The mightiest men and women the world has known for blessing have been those who have been mighty in the affections. They have been people with large, generous hearts. Among the many stories about Queen Victoria that, since her death, have filled the papers, nothing has seemed more delightful to me than the statement that of all the praise which has been written about her in the last score of years or more, in prose and verse, nothing ever gave her so much pleasure as a little poem which told the story of a poor old peasant woman who was made very happy because the Queen nodded to her as she drove by her humble door. The little song runs:

"I'm but an auld body
Livin' up in Deeside
In a twa-roomed bit hoosie
Wi' a toofa' beside;
Wi' my coo an' my grumphy
I'm as happy 's a bee,
But I'm far prooder noo
Since she noddit to me!

"I'm nae sae far past wi't—
I'm grey trig an' hale,
Can plant twa-three tawties,
An' look after my kale;
An' when oor Queen passes
I rin oot to see
Gin by luck she micht notice
An' nod oot to me!

"But I've aye been unlucky,
An' the blinds were aye doon,
Till last week the time
O' her veesit cam' roun';
I waved my bit apron
As brisk 's I could dee,
An' the Queen laughed fu' kindly,
An' noddit to me!

"My son sleeps in Egypt—
It's nae ease to freit—
An' yet when I think o't
I'm sair like to greet;
She may feel for my sorrow,
She's a mither, ye see;
An' may be she kent o't
When she noddit to me!"

These quaint and simple Doric verses appeared anonymously in an obscure Scotch paper, and they came under the Queen's eye accidentally. The homely tribute to her as the mother of her people so touched her tender heart that she sought out the author, and wrote him a beautiful letter of acknowledgment. And over and over again during the last weary years of her life she asked to have these little

verses read to her. It was the heart of the Queen that gave her her great power over her people.

No one can make a greater mistake, so far as the happiness of life is concerned, than to be careless or indifferent about the development of the heart. To neglect to feed the heart upon the tender fellowships of life is to narrow and embitter the years that come after. Will Carleton tells the story of a young man who was sitting in the hotel office looking dreamily and drearily out of the window. The clerk, who had nothing else to do just then, came and sat down by him, to "cheer him up" a little; for it is part of a good hotel man's business to keep his guests happy and contented; they will stay longer.

"Thinking up some new scheme to make money, I'll be bound, Roberts," he ventured, looking quizzically at the youth; "or about some new 'best girl;' or—"

"Or on what a caricature on home even a first-class hotel like this one is," interrupted the young man.

The clerk looked thoughtful. He knew by experience that the other was right.

"You see," continued the guest, "I'd give five hundred dollars to go home and spend the night. I say 'five hundred dollars,' because that's all I'm worth as yet. If it was ten thousand, I'd give it, all the same. And I'm wondering why it was that I didn't stay there more when I could do it for noth-

ing. Father and mother always used to say, 'You're going to stay home to-night, aren't you?' and I'd answer: 'Oh, no! I've got to go to'—this, that or the other. And then I'd be out, maybe, till midnight, or later, and act a little cross at breakfast in the morning."

"But of course no one can expect a young fellow to be tied at home all through his merriest time of life," answered the clerk.

"That's what father used to say," rejoined the guest. "When mother's eyes would moisten a little because I was going out, he would say, laughingly, but I thought a little regretfully, 'We can't put old heads on young shoulders, wife.' And that was true. But the trouble is, I did not realize that my head was going to get older so soon."

"Well, you say you'd give five hundred dollars to drop in there again," ventured the hotel clerk, who began to pity the young man to a degree entirely inconsistent with the hotel's interests. "It won't cost you anywhere near that sum to go there. Why not pay 'the old folks' a visit?"

"Alas," replied the young man, "there are now no 'old folks,' and no home to visit. All are gone. And hundreds of times I could have done so easily what I would now give half of my life to do just once."

Do not, I beseech you, be fitting your own heart for such sorrow in the years to come.

Christ's appeal is to our hearts. It is at the door of the heart that he knocks for admittance. Paul declares in his letter to the Ephesians that the great purpose of all religious teaching and influence is, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." The peace and joy of the Christian religion has its fountain in the heart. In his letter to the Colossians Paul says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Paul always understood that the centre of religion was in the heart, and that in the heart was the great need for Christian comfort. In his second letter to the Thessalonians he utters this sweet prayer for his friends: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

Christians grow in grace and Christian strength as they open their hearts to the coming of Christ,

and as they give themselves in heart fellowship to loving service for him. These are always important and interesting questions to put to ourselves: Am I growing in the divine grace? Am I growing in the knowledge of Christ? Is my heart becoming stronger in righteousness and true holiness? You remember the stream which Ezekiel saw, which was at first but a small stream; but, a quarter of a mile away, it had grown until its waters were ankle-deep, and half a mile away the water was knee-deep. Another thousand cubits, or three-quarters of a mile from the fountain, the water was waist-deep; after going another thousand cubits, or a mile in all, the stream could no longer be forded, and there were waters to swim in. There were no tributaries coming in; it was simply the swelling from the main fountain. The fountain was the sanctuary of God. Suppose you apply this picture of the prophet to your own Christian experience. How many miles are you from the fountain where you first drank of the River of the Water of Life? Are there waters to swim in, in the blessed fullness of experience which you realize, or is your Christian life more shallow now than it was half a mile from where you started? Dr. Maclaren says that Australian rivers are like some men's lives—a chain of ponds in the dry season; nay, not even a chain, but a series, with no connecting channel of water between them. That is like a great many Christian people. They have

isolated times when they feel the voice of Christ's love and yield themselves to the power of the world to come, and then there are long intervals when they feel neither the one nor the other. But the prophet's vision ought to be realized by each of us. It is God's ideal, which there is power in the Gospel to make real in the case of every one of us—the rapid and continuous increase in the depth and in the scour of "the River of the Water of Life" that flows through our lives. Luther used to say, "If you want to clean out a dunghill, turn the Elbe into it." If you desire to have your hearts cleansed of all the foulness of sin, turn the River of Life into it; but it must be always a deepening river that is growing stronger in its tide.

A purely intellectual Christianity, to which the mind accedes, but which does not enlist the heart's affections and control the motive and spirit of a man so that his temper and conversation are mastered by it, has no influence or power for Christ before the world. It is only a heart religion that rings true in the market-places of social fellowship.

Rev. James Robertson tells the story of a little girl who once received a sovereign from her mother, and with it was sent to the shop to make purchases. When she offered the sovereign to the shopkeeper, he rang it upon the counter, and thought there was something suspicious about it. He said to her, "This is not genuine."

"Oh, it must be; my mother has just been to the bank, where she received it from the teller, and only a few minutes ago she handed it to me."

"Well, look here." He took a good sovereign from the till and rang the two together, and proved to her that there was something wrong about it.

She went back to the bank and asked the cashier to give her another one. She said, "My mother gave me this."

"Yes," he said, "I gave her that sovereign."

"Well, the man at the shop refuses to take the sovereign, and says that there is not the right ring about it."

"Oh, he must be mistaken." And then he got another and rang it beside the first coin, and discovered the same thing. Then with a glass he examined it narrowly, and said: "The gold is perfectly good, but there is really a flaw in the coin, and it will have to go back to the mint again."

I think that there are a good many people who are like that coin. They mean to be good, and in the main their lives are moral and upright; but the ring of love, the true ring of sympathy that springs from a warm, loving heart, is not there. They need to go back to the mint again. Oh, I beg you, do not hide your condition from yourself. Let us be honest before God. Have we the right ring? It is not, "Do I mean well? Am I as good as my neighbors? Do I average up pretty well with other professed

Christians?" Oh, no, let us put all such folly away from us. "Is my heart so overflowing with love to God and with gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ that songs of praise constantly make melody in my heart? Am I all aglow with desire to so live before the men and women about me that I shall make them know and feel that Jesus Christ is a Divine Lord and Saviour?" If this is not true, then let me go back to the Mint! You will find it at the mercy-seat. Yield your heart anew to God, and let him stamp it all his own.

Let me call your attention to another thought, that is, the relation between our hearts' love and sympathy for others and the building up of holiness in our own hearts. Take the whole paragraph into your thought: "Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." And now look for the reason for all this: "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God." How could Paul say more strongly that a man can never have a strong heart in holiness before God so long as he is selfish? The unselfish soul opens the door to the pure strong heart. The first word Zacchæus said when he stood before Christ in repentance for his sin was, "The half of my goods I give to the poor."

Dr. Webb-Peploe, the English preacher, tells of a very rich man in his parish who had been very close and niggardly with his money, and had never given much for benevolence. He had a paralytic stroke, and when Dr. Peploe went to see him, he said: "The Lord has stricken me; and I am afraid I may die. I have sent for you at once that I may do what I suppose is right before God; I want to go to heaven, and I want you to take a hundred pounds for the poor." Dr. Peploe looked him straight in the face and said: "Do you think you are going to buy your soul's way to glory by a dirty hundred pounds? Give your money where you like; I will not touch it!" That was pretty strong, but it was the man's salvation. He lingered seven years, a poor, helpless invalid, but that sick-bed was God's flower-bed. His life became generous and loving, the heart within him was broken up and became a heart of flesh, and while he poured forth streams of benevolence, his spiritual life became strong and beautiful.

There is no sweeter fragrance in the world than that which goes forth from a generous heart. At one of the meetings of the Presbyterian General Assembly an effort was made to raise funds sufficient to send a young Princeton graduate to India as a missionary. A lady present noticed a teacher of a home mission school, who was her guest, slip a gold ring from her finger and put it on the plate. She

asked the giver why she did it. The teacher replied that she had no money, but that she knew what it would mean to have the effort to send the missionary fail. She had been told that she must close her own school because no funds were given to support it. But she had refused to give up her work, and had secured through friends enough to continue for a while, because she could not bear to take away from her pupils what they so much needed. And for the same reason she had given her ring, with its valued associations, to help another to do what was so dear to her.

The next morning a delegate brought the ring to the Assembly and told its story. The ring was worth about five dollars. "I will give five dollars to send that ring back to that young woman," said a minister. "I will give five dollars," said the stated clerk. A newspaper reporter handed up five dollars to the platform. Pastors, missionaries, visitors, came forward eagerly with their cash, each one determined to have a share in restoring the ring. In ten minutes over three hundred dollars had been passed to the desk. The heart in the little woman who gave the ring was what did it all. They caught sight of the flame of love and self-sacrifice which made her so glad to do something for Christ's sake, and it touched all their hearts. Let us so open the doors of our hearts, and pour forth our gifts of love to God and to his people, that he shall be able to make our hearts unblamable in holiness before him.

IX.

An Old Portrait of a Christian.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—Psalm 51: 10-13.

When we read a paragraph like this, written thousands of years ago, we are impressed with the fact that human nature is the same in every age, and that the great necessities of the soul are just the same now as in the days of David. David has painted here, many centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ, a portrait of the kind of transformation which must come to a sinful man before he can be useful in winning men to God. And yet if the words were put on the lips of some man in the New Testament, or if we were to hear them fresh and new as the coinage of a heart hot with its own deep experience to-day in our own country and among our own people, we would feel that no better description could be given of that deep and genuine

heart revolution in motive and purpose and life which must transpire before a sinning man may go forth with influence and power to win men from their transgressions and convert them to the love of God in Christ Jesus. Thus we find in David's portrait of a man of God in his day one that serves perfectly as the portrait of a true Christian in our own day. Let us study some of the features of this portrait.

First, a clean heart is fundamental in the Christian life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," said a wise man of old, "for out of it are the issues of life." Christ declares that a bad life must come from a bad heart, and that it is only from a good heart that a flowing stream of good conduct can come. A wholesome character and a pure life can only be maintained by having a clean heart behind them.

David speaks as though the making of a clean heart was the work of God. His cry is, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." That is true, and yet it is not all the truth, for God cannot create a clean heart in us unless it be also our own choice. God will not break down our will in the matter. From our inmost souls we must choose to have a clean heart. I think there are people who deceive themselves at this point. They pray to God and ask him for a clean heart, but down at the bottom of their will-force they do not wish it, and they do not will

it. They keep right on thinking and doing things which are unclean, the while they are praying God to make them clean. There is a word in the first Epistle of John which makes clear the working together of man's will with God's will in the creation of a clean heart in a man who has been sinful. John says, "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you: that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That surely makes it clear. Our walk and our prayers must match. They must run in parallel lines. If a man prays God to give him a clean heart, while he continues to do dark and shady things, his prayers will be of no avail. If we confess our sins and walk in the light—that is, to the very best of our knowledge do right—we can depend up on it that Christ will keep his word and will create in us clean hearts.

The second suggestion, is "a right spirit." The spirit is all-important in a human life. Form and ceremony amount to little; the spirit is everything.

You know how true that is in regard to your neighbors and business associates. No amount of politeness or social polish can take the place of a right and genuine spirit of sympathy or of genuine manliness or womanliness. So in religion; if a man is to be valuable to God and his fellows, the real spirit of reverence and worship must be in him. Some English preacher says that it is the spiritual in our religion which never changes and never grows old. John Wesley in his day speaks of being wearied with the wordy strife, and cries out, "To thee, the Way, the Truth, the Life, at last I turn." And it is interesting to note that while the great theological discussions of that time have been fought out, and have now no interest whatever to the great multitudes of the world, the spiritual hymns that were brought forth in that period live on, because they breathe the living spirit of the Christian faith. Toplady was a great theological debater. Nobody knows or cares anything about that to-day; but the whole world sings his great hymn, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," with reverent heart and dewy eye. Who cares about the old bitter theological discussion connected with the Oxford movement? But men of every shade of denominational life join with tender heart and sympathetic voice in singing Keble's hymn, "Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear," and Cardinal Newman's inspired song, "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom." As the years have gone

on change and decay have fallen on most of the things of that time, but still we sing, and pray as we sing, " O thou who changest not, abide with me."

I do not wish to disparage beautiful churches or beautiful religious forms, but the tendency of humanity to yield to worldliness and let the vital life be displaced by form and ceremony, makes it very important that we should constantly lay the emphasis in our own feeling upon the supreme importance of a right spirit in all our work. I very much prefer a beautiful church, with all its modern accessories, to the old log cabin in which I began my ministry; and all other things being equal, I would rather worship God in a beautiful church than in one of those rude log huts. But if the service in the church is cold and formal, and without the spirit of loving consecration and self-sacrifice, I would a thousand times rather worship in the log cabin with men and women whose hearts breathe the spirit of supreme devotion to the Heavenly Father. As one has said, a marble cistern, exquisitely carved, may be very pleasing to the eye, but if it contains only stagnant, dirty water, I would rather go down on my knees and drink of the brook that gushes from the mountain side. It is the spirit that gives the measure of life.

A consciousness of God's presence is another important feature of a true life. David says, " Cast me not away from thy presence." He knew that

he would have no power if he felt the loneliness of an exile. Only as he walked in the presence of God, and felt that God was with him, would he be powerful for service. I wonder if there are any of us trying to serve God and influence others for righteousness, who yet are without God and with no sense of God's nearness to and presence in our own hearts. If so, let there be a mighty turning unto God this hour. We can do nothing alone. We must have the inspiration and uplift of feeling that come from the assurance that God is with us, and that we are working together with him.

Another phase of this same feature of the portrait is the necessity of the Holy Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is the Spirit of the living God that can make powerful what would otherwise be only weak and useless talent in our hands. Dr. Meyer says that one day while out walking he came on a saw-pit, where a man was hard at work with the upper handle of a long saw which he was raising and lowering. Meyer knew that, though he could not see him, there was another man in the bottom of the pit, the motions of whose body corresponded exactly with those of the man on the surface. The two were co-operating to the same end, and that saw was moving slowly through the heavy beam of timber by the united energy of the man he could see and the one he could not see. The co-operation between these two men is like the co-opera-

tion between the sincere Christian, seeking to win men to God, and the Holy Spirit; and it is the heart and soul of all successful service to God and man. The sawyer at the top of the pit is an emblem of the Christian minister whose heart is given up to his purpose; or of the earnest Sunday-school teacher who takes seriously the divine privilege which is his; it is an emblem of the Christian mother who holds herself as God's steward over her children, or of the Christian business man who feels that the men in his employ are immortal souls for whom he must give an account. But at the other end of this enginery of influence and power, hidden out of sight but always there, is the Holy Spirit, working with every man or woman who with devout purpose is seeking to bring men to God.

There is another interesting characteristic in this portrait, that is, the joy which lights it up. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." What is the chief characteristic of the joy of salvation? There is no joy so deep and so precious, and yet it is a joy with an element of earnest responsibility in it. Paul suggests its character in that sentence in the second letter to the Corinthians, when he is speaking about the light afflictions that are only temporary but shall result in "an eternal weight of glory." Dr. Matheson, the blind preacher of Edinborough, has a very beautiful thought, and one full of teaching, on this point. He says that the transit

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from earth to heaven is not an emancipation from care; it is an emancipation from care about ourselves. A man loses all his remorse, all his weight of guilt, all his burden of fear of punishment; the Lord takes all that away when he forgives us. He sets us free from it all. But he gives us in its place a "weight of glory." He empties us that we may be filled again with a higher care, love's care. There is a weight which is most felt in heaven, and which is heaven's glory; it is the labor of love. And so the Lord, when he forgives our sin, restores unto us the joy of salvation. He gives us the joy of realizing that it is our privilege to have fellowship with Jesus Christ in saving others. The joy of salvation is never the joy of ease or self-indulgence. It is the joy of self-sacrifice; it is the joy of exertion; it is the joy of taking upon your shoulder another's burden; it is the joy of throwing the life-line to a man who is drowning; it is the joy that thrills through a man's soul when he feels that but for him some one would perish, but that through his help a man or a woman or a child has been redeemed. Oh, it is a glorious joy, but a joy that the self-indulgent, the worldly, the shirk, never can know. Nothing will ever come within the reach of these to compare with the deep and blessed joy known to those who experience "the joy of salvation."

O brothers and sisters, I covet for each one of us that joy. As Matheson says, "The joy of thy Lord

is not a bird song; it is a heart's enlargement. The risen Christ remains not in the garden; he must ascend to the cares of his Father. The place prepared for thee is no scene of luxurious ease, no plot of ground shut off from mortal pain. There is a gate leading into the highways and the hedges, opening out into the far country of the prodigal son. And through this gate thy Father would have thee go, to minister, to succor, to save. This is the place prepared for thee in the mansions of thy Father. This is the ivory gate and golden, where the angels go out and in. This is the narrow way which leadeth unto light; and they who have found that life, retrace the road to bring their brother in. Thy weight of responsibility will be thy weight of glory."

If we have all these characteristics, we shall know what David meant when he said, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit," or as the New Version puts it, "Uphold me with a free spirit." The consciousness of being right in God's sight, a keen sense of the presence of God, an assurance that we are working together with the Holy Spirit, and the glow of service inspired and cheered by the joy of salvation will help us to go forth in a free spirit. We shall have the freedom of the saints. All the handicaps will be taken away; every weight and sin that besets a man is thrown aside, and he runs steadfastly in the race that is set before him. Many Christians lack freedom because they are going clogged and yoked and

weighted down with a hundred burdens that ought to be thrown away. "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

What is the result of such a life? Two results are suggested. First, transgressors shall see God in us: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways." We shall not have to invite them to a formal school in order to do it, either. They will feel the presence of God in our conversation, in our treatment of others, and in all the spirit of our daily life. When I was a boy at home, if I fell into any sin, nothing convicted me so much as the pure, sincere Christian life of my father and mother. It was their lives more than anything else that taught the boyish transgressor the ways of God. A man said to me not a great while ago, "The thing that brought me to Christ was the Christian conduct of my employer. I watched him narrowly, and he never swerved from the right. I saw opportunities where by swerving from strict righteousness he might greatly increase his profits, but he never faltered for a moment. After a while it came to have a great fascination for me; there was something so powerful in it that it constantly convicted me of sin. I saw God's way in him."

And, finally, sinners shall be converted unto God. The religion that does not make converts is of no

avail. A selfish Christianity is a misnomer. Christ does not tell us to shine our light, but we are to have so much of the light in us that when we go forth among men the light will pour out upon the darkness and dispel it. I feel very profoundly that something is wrong with us as Christians, or there would be more people converted to Christ. Too many persons are coming into our Sunday-school classes, remaining Sabbath after Sabbath, for months, and going away without having seen the Lord. Too many people come into our churches Sunday after Sunday, and though hearing the message from the pulpit, go away without being saved. Too many people live in our homes with us, work with us in the office and the store, without being convicted of sin by the purity and the singleness of devotion to God expressed in our characters and in our conduct. May God save us from being stumbling-blocks and barriers that shall keep men from the kingdom rather than lead them into it! May God help us to search our hearts! Is there uncleanness there? Have impure thoughts and imaginations nestled and brought forth their young there? If so, may God help us this day, at the mercy-seat and in the secret closet, to open our hearts to the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. Are we working alone? Have we received the Holy Ghost since we believed? or is the whole thought of the Holy Spirit vague and unreal to us? If this be true, I pray you go no longer exiled and alone

to try to do a work too great for you unaided, but repent of your sins and open your hearts as Cornelius and his household did under the sermon of Peter, and receive the Holy Ghost. May Charles Wesley's soul-inspiring hymn be the prayer of every heart:

"Jesus, thine all-victorious love
Shed in my heart abroad:
Then shall my feet no longer rove,
Rooted and fixed in God.

"O that in me the sacred fire
Might now begin to glow,
Burn up the dross of base desire
And make the mountains flow!

"O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call;
Spirit of burning, come!

"Refining fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole.

"My steadfast soul, from falling free,
Shall then no longer move,
While Christ is all the world to me,
And all my heart is love."

X.

Three Men whom Jesus Called.

"And it came to pass that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him: Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—Luke 9: 57-62.

HERE are three men whom Jesus called to be his disciples, whose conversation with the Saviour at that interesting time ought to have a great message for us. The first man responds with a quick outburst of enthusiasm. At once, without any parleying, he says, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Christ evidently saw that though the man's answer did him honor, and that he was entirely sincere, he did not fully appreciate the earnestness and seriousness of the undertaking to which he consented. To follow Jesus then was not—nor is it

now—a holiday excursion. Christ wished this man to understand very clearly at the start the full meaning of the declaration that he would share his fate with Jesus. He at once points out to him that to do this will no doubt mean the loss of a great many things to which he has been accustomed, and will necessitate much self-denial. Jesus calls attention to the fact that he is the most homeless of men on the earth; he points upward to a little branch where a bird has built her nest, and he says, "Even the birds of the air have nests;" he stretches his hand toward a fox that is running for his hole on the side of the hill, and says, "Even the foxes have holes where they may hide when pursued by the hunter, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." We are sure that Jesus did not mean to drive this man away from his desire to become his disciple. But he did not want him to start out with a wrong idea, or from wrong motives. If he became his disciple, then he must share the sorrows as well as the joys, the persecution as well as the praise, of his Master and Lord.

I think we need this message. I am sure that modern Christianity needs to hear it with increased emphasis. Are there not many who are glad to shelter themselves under the name of Jesus for the sake of the respectability, the social and moral standing it implies, yet who are unwilling to share with Christ when to do so means to bear the brunt of a

popular opinion in the town or country which is wrong and wicked? Remember that Christ never calls right wrong, or wrong right, because the wrong happens to be in the majority and the right is crushed to the wall. Show me anywhere in the world a cause which stands for goodness and righteousness against a majority however great, where to defend the right means to be abused and slandered and cast down, and I will show you there the Man of Nazareth, with the thorn-pierced brow and the nail-wounded palm. Your compromising, self-careful men and women, who wear the name of Jesus as a badge of honor when it is popular, and pull on an overcoat of compromise and cowardice to hide the badge when to show it means loss of votes or of business or of praise, need to hear the heart-searching words of Jesus, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." You say at the communion altar, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." Do you mean by that that you will follow Jesus and his standards of righteousness when to do so means to run straight against the high priests in business and politics and society in your circle? If you do not, then what folly is your declaration to your Lord! Oh, may God make us true! Give us three hundred men and women in any church who are like Gideon's band of three hundred, utterly unselfish, ready to go thirsty them-

selves that the cause of God and righteousness may triumph, and there will be such an upheaval for righteousness, such a spreading abroad of Christian influence and power, that the whole world shall take note of it. It is not only more Christians that we need, but a better quality of Christians. We need more loyalty to Jesus Christ. We need a readier spirit of self-sacrifice, a more abounding emotion of love to the Saviour, a fidelity that will not waver. We need men and women who love the church of Jesus Christ with such intensity that it is the first and foremost thing in their lives, and everything else takes a second place; to whom Christ is more than business or politics or society. It is to be that kind of Christians that we are called, and God help us if we are failing to meet the demand!

The second man presents to us another phase of the same message. When Christ appealed to him to follow him as his disciple, he expressed his willingness to do so, but said, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." At first glance, probably, we are shocked at this answer of Christ, and are ready to say, "This is harsh and unfeeling and unnatural." But we must take into consideration that Jesus knew what was in man; and he knew that if this man went back to his father's house, and to the long mourning ceremonies which were to follow,

he would be again entangled with worldly things. A man who might be very valuable in the furtherance of the Gospel would thus be altogether lost. Christ saw that the man, while expressing his willingness to follow him, did not really surrender his will to him, and did not look upon following Christ as the first and supreme thing in his life. That "suffer me first" suggests the self-will which was behind the request. Christ will be first or nothing in your life and mine. Religion is a place where a man cannot carry water on both shoulders; all life's blessings will be spilled in the attempt. It was as if Christ was saying to this man, "Your father is dead; your going back can be of no value to him now; but multitudes of other men are dying in their sins, and others are undergoing a living death because of the darkness and iniquity in which they exist. Let the dead bury their dead, and you come and follow me, and get your heart on fire with the message of eternal life, that you may carry hope and mercy to the living."

Then here is this third man: "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." And Jesus said unto him, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Again that thought of harshness comes back at these words, and we are ready to say, "Surely there could be no harm in the man's going

to bid his father and mother farewell; and not only would there be no harm, but it would be right and proper." Perhaps you recall the story of how Elijah called Elisha to fit himself to be a man of God. You remember that when Elijah came striding across the field where the young Elisha was ploughing with his oxen, he threw his prophet's mantle over the young man's shoulders and walked away as if to leave him. The young man knew at once that that was God's call, and he ran after Elijah and said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." And Elijah, stern man though he was, gave his consent. Why should Christ, whose whole character was dominated by tenderness and sympathy, have acted in so different a manner? I think we may find the explanation in the fact that the father and mother of Elisha were evidently godly people, who would feel that their son could not be honored in any other way so much as to be a prophet of the Most High God. Elisha would only get encouragement and blessing from his parents; for him to go back home under those circumstances would be only to strengthen him in his great purpose. But Jesus is talking to a man, no doubt, whose home friends would be bitterly opposed to his going away on what they would call "a fool's chase." And Christ saw that deep down in this man's heart there was a lack of decision; he wanted to take one backward look before he leaped into a

thorough espousal of the Christian life. It was as if he said, "Yes, Lord, I am much taken with you, and I intend to follow you, but let me go home and think it over; let me talk with my old friends about it, and see what they say." Christ saw it was now or never with this man. If he went back among his old associates and talked it over with them, they would all be opposed to his following Christ, and he would have odds of ten to one against him. And so Jesus said, in effect, "If you go back, you are lost; choose now what you are going to do. You must decide it for ever. You have been listening to my words, and have been interested in my message; you have put your hand to the plough, and if you go back now, undecided, you will prove yourself to be unworthy of the kingdom."

I am sure that there are many who need this great message just as certainly as did this man to whom Jesus was speaking. It is religious indecision that threatens to be your ruin. You know enough of righteousness to be saved, and you have many good impulses about it, and many earnest longings for the Christian life; yet there is great danger that you will be eternally lost through the lack of earnest, resolute decision of character. You need the support which would come from a complete committal of yourself to Christ. When Garibaldi sailed from Genoa, in 1860, to deliver Sicily from its oppressors, he took with him only a thousand volunteers. They

landed at Marsala, almost in the face of the Neapolitan fleet. When the commander of Marsala, returning to the port, saw the steamers on which Garibaldi and his soldiers had come, he gave immediate orders to destroy them. Garibaldi, having landed his men, looked with indifference, almost with pleasure, upon their destruction. "Our retreat is cut off," he said, exultingly, to his soldiers. "We have no hope but in going forward; it is death or victory." They went forward to great and glorious victory because every man had to be a hero: every man was like ten men, because there was no chance to go back; they could only go on. O man, wavering and undecided, convicted of sin, and yet half hugging your chains, turn your face to the front and march openly into the ranks of the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. So long as a man dallies with a decision, retreat and failure are ever possible to him.

Among the prisoners taken captive early in the battle at Waterloo, there was a Highland piper. Napoleon, struck with his mountain dress and sinewy limbs, asked him to play on his instrument, which seems a part of nature itself in the mountains and glens of Scotland. "Play a pibroch," said Napoleon; and the Highlander played. "Play a march." It was done. "Play a retreat." "Na, na," said the Highlander, proudly; "I never learned to play a retreat." So Christ is calling for soldiers who do not know how to play a retreat, but who have

given their whole hearts and souls up to him and to his service.

I call you to this noble discipleship. Be no longer wavering like a wave of the sea. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Arouse all that is noble and brave and courageous in you to choose that which is noblest and best in human life. You have been taking backward looks too long. Look forward, look upward. Only Christ can save you. Only the Christian life is worth living. Let your life pass without Christ, without the noble ambitions and the lofty fellowships and the glorious hopes that come with him, and whatever else you may do, your life will be an empty and miserable failure. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and all other things that are worth having will be added unto you. Honor Christ your Saviour, and honor yourself, by making Christ the first Lord of your life.

XI.

Children's Rights.

"Do not sin against the child."—Genesis 42: 22.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN, whose book has suggested to me this discourse, says that when she began to talk and write about this subject, she concluded to try it on certain types of people, and see how they took it. She first interviewed the man who washed her windows.

"Dennis," she said, "I am writing an article on the 'Rights of Children.' What do you think about it?" Dennis scratched his head a moment, as if badly put to it for an answer, but finally replied, "What do I think about it, mum? Why, I think we'd ought to giv'm to'm. But Lor', mum, if we don't, they take 'em, so what's the odds?"

She next approached her French dressmaker, and propounded the same question to her, while that industrious woman was fitting a collar on her neck.

"The rights of the child, madam?" she asked, her scissors poised in the air.

"Yes, the rights of the child."

"Is it of the American child, madam?"

"Yes, of the American child."

"Oh! he has them!"

Now both of these incidents suggest the fact that there are a large number of people who mistake indulgences for rights. It is one thing to receive great grants of self-indulgence by fits and starts, and quite another thing to receive intelligent justice all the time. Multitudes of people who are bringing up children, fairly wallow, every once in a while, in puddles of parental affection, but never recognize intelligently the rights of their children.

Very briefly, let us study a few of these rights. First, then, a child has the right to grow—to grow naturally and genuinely, as a plant or a tree grows. No child can have a really happy childhood without this natural and simple growth, and to give a child happiness of the true sort is a great thing. The brilliant and witty Sidney Smith once said, "If you make children happy now, you will make them happy twenty years hence by the memory of it;" and many of us are grateful examples of the truth of that statement. A child, to grow naturally, must not be hurried out of its childhood. Some people do not seem to know what growth means. There is a difference between growing and swelling. Little Mary came down one morning, and said, "Oh, mother, I've grown so big in the night! Just look at my face and neck." But that was not growing. Her face was swollen with the mumps. After a while

the swelling went down, and Mary was thinner and more peaked than before. We must all beware, in dealing with children, lest they swell instead of grow. Pride and self-will, and many precocious, affected ways, are exhibitions of swelling, not growing. Children are often pushed along in a hot-house way, in the matter of their clothing, so as to take all simplicity and happiness out of their lives.

A lady was visiting in a certain home where a little girl was daily tortured by her ambitious mother, who was trying to make a "woman" out of her. She was compelled to wear clothing that it was an anguish to get on and off. One evening the visitor heard the little victim groan to her nurse, as she wriggled her little curly head out of her gown, "Oh! only God knows how I hate gettin' peeled out o' this dress!" A child so treated is often only a little pet, very much like the pet dog that is trained to jump through the hoop, or roll over, or go to sleep, or say its prayers for a lump of sugar. It is a show creature, and the people who bring up such children are sinning against immortal beings in a way that ought to make the world weep.

Children have a right to originality. They ought to be encouraged to ask questions and pursue investigation into the facts of the world about them. It is a shame to rub out a child's interrogation points until he gets to be such a little mummy that he quits asking questions. There are multitudes of grown-

up people about us who find it utterly impossible to talk about anything in society except the weather or the personal gossip of their set, who were made so by their parents through suppression of the early and original questioning of their fresh young minds. The dull and monotonous bores of social life are the penalty for sins against the child. If you want a brilliant, original, imaginative, sparkling man or woman, whose conversation shall be charming, elevating, and delightful, you must begin to create such a personality in childhood by encouraging the romantic and genuine questionings of the mind and heart.

A man who undertook to write a biography of a great man, some time ago, complained that in conferring with large numbers of friends of the distinguished person, he was astonished to find an utter lack on their part of memory of interesting and picturesque incidents connected with a man who had himself been a very strong and rugged and intensely alive personality. Summing up his remarks on the subject, he said, "What is the use of trying to write a biography with such mummies for witnesses! They would have seen just as much if they had had nothing but glass eyes in their heads."

But how can you expect anything else of people, when, during the fresh growing years of childhood, they are met at every question with "Don't mind," and "Don't bother me now," and "Do stop such

foolish questions!" and kindred expressions that are forever shoved down over their heads as a lamp extinguisher is over a light. Their originality is extinguished in the same way, and then we wonder why it does not burn in later life. Now and then we see a child brought up in a different manner, and how different is the result! What a gold mine, for example, for a historical writer or a biographer, is growing in a little boy who was asked by his teacher to describe a bat. The reply was, "He's a nasty little mouse, with india-rubber wings, and shoestring tail, and bites hard!" The more you study that definition, the more certain you will be that the boy's imagination had not been dwarfed.

A child has a right to loving discipline. Children cannot be sinned against more grievously than to permit them to grow up to manhood or womanhood without learning to obey. A lady once advertised in a New York City paper for a German governess "to mind a little girl three years old." The error here, no doubt, was in the English, and not in the purpose, but there are many homes where it could be taken literally. Strong, self-controlling men and women are never produced except through wise and loving discipline. An ignorant negro was once overheard in his prayers to say, "Let me so lib dat when I die I may hab manners, dat I may know what to say when I see my heabenly Lord!" If men and women are to have good manners, taking that word

in the noble sense, they must acquire them through discipline as they pass through childhood.

The emphasis needs to be put on the fact that the discipline must be loving. A child who obeys the parent only because he fears punishment, is simply a slave, cowering under the lash of one whom he regards as a tyrant. Children are sometimes driven into being cowards and liars through fear, but such a feeling will never be aroused in a child where intelligent love guides the discipline. We cannot, as parents or teachers, put from us our responsibility to develop in children the power to govern themselves. Parents never make a greater mistake than to imagine that they run the risk of losing the love of their children by holding them closely to obedience, to right control. Somebody has well said, "Children never love those who spoil them."

A friend of mine, a wise woman who has successfully brought up a large family who are proving to be helpers in the world, and a family who are devotedly loyal to their mother, told me this incident about one of her boys. She said that, one day, when he was small, he climbed up on a large box in the room to play. She told him to get down, as he was in danger of falling off and hurting himself. But he plead with her so hard, that, against her better judgment, she let him continue to play there. Sure enough, after a little, the boy became absorbed in his play and came tumbling over backwards on to the

floor, striking on the back of his head and getting a very severe hurt. As soon as he could make himself intelligible through his tears and cries, he exclaimed, very reproachfully, "You ought not to have let me stay on that box! You should have made me get down!" The mother said, "That was a good lesson to me, and in later years I often reminded my boy of it in more serious matters." Many a man is in the penitentiary, and many a woman has made shipwreck of life, because a fond but unwise parent sinned against them in their childhood by permitting them to grow up without learning the greatest lesson of life—obedience.

Children have a right to a simple, straightforward, wholesome Christianity. It ought to be as natural as is the love between father and mother and the children. When it is so, religion, gentle, all-pervading, all-comforting, is the very atmosphere the child breathes. Such children grow up in the kingdom of heaven, to be pillars for righteousness, wherever they may dwell. There ought never to be a home where childhood is being developed, without the worship of God being as open and regular as the manifestation of paternal sympathy and love. The religious nature must be fed just as the physical and intellectual life is nourished. Family worship, of some simple and sweet kind, ought to be a part of the day's round in every Christian home. No wonder we grow material and worldly if we devote our-

selves only to worldly and material things, and give the spiritual in our natures no chance to express itself. Our lives will be dominated by spirituality when every day is dominated by sincere and loving worship of God and humble faith in divine guidance. Much depends on the minister, vastly important is the Sunday-school teacher, of large interest is the teacher in the public school and the college; but, after all, the human destiny, for time and eternity, is more largely determined in the home, and by the spirit which controls there, than anywhere else.

I never speak on Children's Day but my heart goes out in sympathy and fellowship with those who have had loaned to them little visitors from the sky who have soon been chilled by the air of earth and have flown away again to be with God. It is hard, many times, to sit with empty arms and aching hearts while others talk of the responsibilities and hopes and blessings which their children bring. And there are others of us, who still have arrows in our quiver at home, but have lost out of our flock for a little while one or more that were very dear to us, and who are always in our memory and in our hearts. I think it ought to comfort us to know that the good God who loaned them to us for a while, and then in his loving wisdom called them back again to the heavenly home, watches over them, and keeps them safely and happily against the day when we shall see them again. The sweetest word of com-

fort I have seen for a long time for such a loss is a little poem written by Gertrude Curtiss, who sings:

"There is many a weary, footsore lamb
That no tender arms enfold;
But forever at rest
On the Shepherd's breast
Are our wee white lambs in the Fold.

"There are storms for those on the mountain side,
There is snow and bitter cold;
But safe and warm
And sheltered from storm
Are our wee white lambs in the Fold.

"There are many evils lurking without,
There are dangers of which we are told;
But safe from all harm
And free from alarm
Are our wee white lambs in the Fold.

"There is many a lamb that has gone astray,
There are wanderers young and old;
But pure and sweet,
At the Shepherd's feet
Lie our wee white lambs in the Fold.

"O hearts that are mourning a little one gone,
That are longing its face to behold,
Thank God for the care
That protects them there,—
The wee white lambs in the Fold."

XII.

The Liberty to do Wrong.

"I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine."—Jeremiah 34: 17.

The irony of this text is terrible. These people had sinned against God. They had promised to serve him by giving liberty to their slaves; but they had broken their vows, having concluded that the command of God was too rigorous, and that, instead of giving freedom to their bond servants, they would give themselves liberty from obedience to the Divine commandment. The result was that God sent his brave prophet to tell them that they should have liberty, but it would be a kind of liberty that they would not enjoy. They had seized the liberty to sin, and the punishment would be liberty to perish by the sword and the pestilence and the famine.

We have suggested here a very important and sadly interesting theme. It is also a timely theme, for this is a day in which men are talking much about breaking away from the laws of God. Even men who claim to be leaders in social and religious reform are proposing to reform the world by giv-

ing themselves and it liberty from those great fundamental laws of God on which the safety and nobility of human character and life have always depended. There seems to be in the air a vicious outbreak against all law. The cry for liberty, which has often been so noble and so holy, is in our time used for the basest and most ignoble purposes. We can see illustrations of this rebellious spirit against law in the way in which such institutions as the liquor saloon and its nefarious brood, the gambling hell and the brothel, defy the law in our large towns and cities. And these institutions which prey upon the life of the community, sucking the blood out of the veins of society, are able in many ways to defy law, and to bring righteous laws into contempt, because there appears to be a growing spirit of anarchy and lawlessness in circles which ought to be wiser. We ought to learn from history that nothing is so dangerous to the rights of the people as a prevailing spirit of lawlessness. The law is the fortress of the people's liberties. Especially is that true in our own land, where the laws are made by the people, and only disaster and ruin can come from giving way to lawlessness.

We may see another illustration in the cases of would-be reformers who propose to abrogate the laws of the Bible and of Jesus Christ in regard to marriage and the family. The long catalogue of divorce cases is constantly augmented by the agita-

tion and discussion which increases this spirit of social unrest, and constantly dulls the sense of moral responsibility. Every inroad that is made into the sacredness and stability of the marriage tie and of the family life is in the direction of license and lawlessness which can carry only disaster in its train. The man who demands the liberty to do wrong is sure to get the worst of it in the end. The old declaration of the Apostle Paul, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," was the utterance of a great truth which is just as vitally true to-day as it has ever been. The laboring men who help on the revolt against the Sunday laws which insure a day of rest and genuine recreation, only hasten a liberty which means slavery. It can only end in the liberty for the laborer to work seven days in the week and become but a cog in the wheel of unbroken toil. All history shows that Sunday desecration, and the defiance of law which breaks down Sunday protection, soon end in a Sunday of work for the laboring people. So it is true that a breaking away from the laws which protect and make sacred the family life lead to degradation, physical, social and moral. The liberty to do wrong always falls with terrific force in punishment on the wrongdoer.

But my purpose is rather to emphasize the great lesson of the text in its relation to the personal character of the individual. Man is a free-will agent. He may choose his career. He may use his liberty

to do right, or, as a horse, mad at the restrictions of his harness or his load, seizes the bit between his teeth and dashes down the crowded street, spreading alarm and disaster in his path, so a man may seize the liberty to do wrong, and for the time defy the laws of God and man. But it always means ruin.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson tells how he was once conducted through a large prison. The jailer had a great many keys, and every little way there was an iron gate in the path, every few steps were locks, bolts and bars, dim corridors, grim cells, frowning gratings, suggesting the dreary treadmill in which the prisoners lived. It was a painful tour, with no sense of liberty, only an overwhelming sense of law. The prisoners had defied the laws and seized the liberty to break them, and in so doing they had plunged themselves into the liberty of this prison-house. From the jail Dr. Watkinson went to see the conservatories of a very wealthy man, and he was interested to notice that this lover of flowers and plants carried as many keys as the jailer, and at every few steps was unlocking and locking doors. But the consciousness of the visitors was entirely different. Each new scene into which they entered was a chamber of beauty. Now it was a cool fernery, full of delicate forms; then a house of stately palms; now it was a crystal palace of roses or passion flowers; then a choice shrine of wonderful orchids; now an orangery; then a vinery, gorgeous with purple

and golden clusters. It was all loveliness, fragrance, and delight. This time the keys were golden; they made music as they turned. Whenever a door was unlocked, it opened into a realm of beauty. Every time one was locked it was to make that realm of glory secure. The jailer with his keys seemed like some horrid spectre; the gardener with his keys appeared like an angel of Paradise.

There could not be a better illustration of our theme. Obey God's law, and his statutes become a delight; they blossom into beauty and fragrance. The Sabbath becomes the parlor-day of civilization, into which all beautiful and holy things are gathered, when men and women wait upon it with holy reverence. The laws of marriage and the family produce the sweetest picture of heaven that the human mind can conceive and the human heart can cherish, when obeyed with loving fidelity. The laws of the human body obeyed mean health and strength, guaranteeing clearness of mental perception. The laws of the heart and life obeyed mean pure thoughts, wholesome imaginations, happy memories, peaceful meditations, hopeful inspiration for the future. God's law obeyed in childhood means a happy and vigorous youth. The divine laws obeyed in youth mean a strong and splendid manhood. Obedience to God's will in manhood means an old age glorified by memories of good deeds, of faithful services rendered, and holy friend-

ships formed; and such an old age gives promise of a triumphant entrance into heaven beyond. To seize the liberty to break God's laws, to sin against his wisdom and his love, means to change the garden of life into a prison-house. Are any of you who are reading this turning away from the demand of Christ for your obedience, and your open confession and service, because you want more liberty, more freedom for yourself? If so, I can assure you that there is no liberty which you secure by refusing the claims of Christ which will not be the liberty of the sword and the pestilence and the famine. It is impossible that Christ could ask anything of you that does not mean your best and truest good, and for you to take the liberty of disobeying him is to take a liberty that will mean bondage in the end.

A ministerial acquaintance of mine tells of a friend who was very dear to him, and whom, with all the powers of love and persuasion he possessed, he sought to win away from the beginning of certain evil habits, and to lead to become openly a Christian. But he failed, and the man went on, in what he called "the path of liberty." The result was that, a few years later, his old friend, the minister, was summoned to his death-bed. His dissipation had brought him to an untimely end. With great sorrow the minister hastened to obey the call. He entered the room where the man lay on a couch, in full every-day dress. The minister put out his hand, and

the other man grasped it excitedly, and said, "Sit down, sit down right there." He sat down. Then the man lying on the sofa said, "Wife, I wish you would take these strings off me. There are strings spun all around my body. I wish you would take them off me." The minister saw it was delirium. The wife knelt beside him, and assured him he was not bound, and the minister knelt beside him and prayed, but he died in that horrible delirium, begging them to take off the bands that bound him. O my friends, are any of you weaving cords of evil habit that, after a while, are to wrap you round and round, until you are so completely held by them that you are a helpless prisoner to your sin? Remember that every day of liberty to do wrong assumed by you hastens that terrible consummation. The time to settle with an evil habit is when you are tempted to form it. Deny it, refuse it then, ere it has been pampered and has grown strong by years of self-indulgence. Some poet, with clear insight into the tragedies of the human heart, represents one who has long yielded to sin as crying out in his despair:

"Oh, could I go back to the fork of the road—
Back over the long miles I have carried the load;
Back to the place where I had to decide,
By this sign or that sign my footsteps to guide;

"Back to the sorrow, back to the care,
Back to the place where the future was fair;
Oh, were I there now, decision to make,
My Father in heaven, which road would I take?

"Oh, could I go back to the fork of the road
With the wisdom I've gathered in bearing this load,
A different decision, dear God, would I make,
And the path of the righteous my footsteps should take.

"The broad road of pleasure no glory hath won,
It hath brought me to anguish—my whole life undone;
And now, at the end, ah, 'tis wretched and drear!
My heart is nigh breaking, I tremble with fear.

"The road is so tangled with brier and thorn,
To find the way back I'm ever o'erworn;
Deep sunk in despair, I am 'wildered and lost:
Of choosing the wrong road how bitter the cost!

"If God in his mercy would show me the way
To return, to return to the light of youth's day,
My road I would choose by the sign of the Word—
With Jesus my Leader, my Way, and my Lord."

You cannot go back to the cross-roads again, but you can make to-day the day of your salvation by repenting of your sins and throwing yourself on the pure mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

A man in one of the Western States applied to the legislature to change his name, for a singular reason. He had been for years a notorious liar, but determined to reform, and resolved never to utter a falsehood again. So thoroughly was he changed that he did not wish to be known by his old name, and so applied to the legislature for a new one. That incident is suggestive of the promise which Christ makes to us in the Book of Revelation, when he says, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out:

and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, . . . and I will write upon him my new name." Make that promise your own this very hour!

XIII.

The Uncut Leaves of the Book of Life.

"And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."—Isaiah 42: 16.

THE marvel and mystery of human life add much to its interest. Although men have been living for thousands of years in the world, and the paths of love and hope and fear and hate and ambition are trodden knee-deep in ruts from the hurrying feet of many generations, yet every new life is a separate study of Almighty God, and every new human heart looks into a future full of mystery and wonder and marvelous possibilities. None of us who have grown to maturity can fail to look back over the path and see, here and there along the way, how near we came to being something very different from what we are. If we had taken that road to the right, or the other that allured us from the left, how far away from where we now stand would we be! And sometimes we marvel to know what there was

behind the gate, the latch of which we held in our hands and almost lifted, but did not. Or, to change the figure back to our theme, we came to a place in the book of life where the leaves were not yet cut, and we turned from them and did not cut them. What did those pages hold? We stand to-day before other uncut leaves, and we know not what is printed on them, and we scarcely dare to read further. Will we cut them, or will we turn away from them and leave the secret forever unread? The theme has been suggested to me by Clara Weir's earnest poem:

"Oh, a wonderful book is the book of life,
Whether the binding be rich and fair
With luminations, and gildings rife
On the finest vellum, thick and rare,
Or whether the binding be poor and mean,
Faded and cheap, and flimsy withal,
The veriest prose that was ever seen,
To be found for a trifle in any stall—
And still the discerning spirit grieves
To know that each volume has uncut leaves.

"'Tis a wonderful work from a Master's hand,
Where comedy, tragedy, smiles and tears
Swiftly tread on the shining sand,
As the scenes are shifted by passing years;
And there from the light of day are hid
All things beautiful, good and fair,
In the brief enclosure, from lid to lid,
Whatever the heart desires is there—
But, oh, how the spirit grieves and grieves
O'er the pitiful pathos of uncut leaves.

"There is fair Success with her beckoning hand,
And Health, with her rosy and laughing face,
There is home, and peace, and a smiling land,
Where heartache never can find a place.
There are beautiful children between the leaves—
The crowning glory of motherhood,
And a wreath of love for each heart that grieves,
A love that is never understood—
Yet forever the watchful spirit grieves
O'er the mystery here of our uncut leaves.

"For every volume, whate'er it be,
Has leaves which never can see the light,
Their gracious beauty and symmetry
Are never disclosed to the longing sight;
And lives are clouded, and eyes are dim,
For lack of that which is near to all;
With those uncut leaves they are folded in,
And they cannot respond to prayer or call—
And throughout life the spirit grieves
For only one glimpse of those uncut leaves.

"When shall we see that Author's hand
Which fashioned the volume we hold in fee—
With a wisdom we cannot understand,
Above and beyond our mastery—
Cuts with a loving care each leaf,
Never forgetting the end in view,
Fills out each story, however brief,
With a kind intent and a purpose true—
And who can doubt that the Author grieves
When we question his love by our uncut leaves?"

Let us study some of the places in the book of life where we are likely to leave uncut leaves to our great disadvantage. One of these is in our Bible reading. To a great many people who count themselves Chris-

tians, and are trying to be such, their Bible is a book of uncut leaves. Suppose your Bible had come to you with all the leaves uncut five years ago, and there had been none cut since except those you have read and pondered for Scriptural help and blessing; how much of your Bible would be to-day a book of uncut leaves? It has been practically a closed book to you. We talk about the great blessing of Protestantism in securing for us an open Bible. But what good is an open Bible with the leaves uncut and unread? No Christian man can afford to thrust himself into the business life of the day without a spiritual, health-giving breath from off the ocean of God's Word. Dr. Wayland Hoyt beautifully says that the reading of the Bible every day brings into life a breeze and a touch of God, of recognition of him, of motto for him. We often hear a man say, "My wife reads her Bible every day." The inference is that he does not find time to do it. But the man who goes to the foundry or the shop or the store, and is thrust into association with worldly and wicked men, needs the reading of the Bible to get God and the thought of him as a source of strength in his heart, as surely as his wife needs it to sustain her in her round of household duties. It is always a bad sign, and one that is full of threatening of danger, when a Christian business man has made up his mind that he has not time to read his Bible every day before going to work, and in the evening before giving himself up to

slumber. A man's religion will smother in that kind of an atmosphere. O brothers, sisters, cut a new leaf in your Bible every day, and refresh yourselves with the stored-up spiritual oxygen which you will find there. There is life in it that will sustain you amid all the temptations and trials of your daily experience.

When we leave the Bible uncut, we are almost sure to make the next great blunder of failing to cut the leaves that open to us the realm of simple and familiar communion with God and prayer to him. Many people say prayers every day, but they are formal and ceremonial, with a certain awe and sublimity and reverence about them that are uplifting, but lacking the sweet familiarity of a child's communication with a father, a certain atmosphere of loving confidence.

Professor Henry Drummond tells the story of a little girl who once said to her father: "Papa, I want you to say something to God for me, something I want to tell him very much. But I have such a little voice that I don't think he could hear it away up in heaven; but you have a big man's voice, and he will be sure to hear you." And Drummond says that the wise father took his little girl in his arms and told her that even though God were at that moment surrounded by all his holy angels, sounding on their golden harps, and singing to him one of the grandest and sweetest songs of praise that was ever

heard in heaven, he was sure that he would say to them, "Hush! stop the singing for a little while. There's a little girl away down on the earth who wants to whisper something in my ear." Cut the leaves that open into that realm of sweet and loving communion with your Heavenly Father. It is awful for us to live with prayer practically a sealed book, with the dust gathering on the edges of its uncut leaves.

There is another book where we are always tempted to fail to cut the leaves, and that is where we face a duty that seems hard for us. But if we do turn away and fail to find what is behind those uncut leaves, we are certain to lose largely. Who can tell how much Moses lost when God ordered him down into Egypt to speak to Pharaoh his will, and lead the children of Israel out of bondage? There was no thought of Aaron at first. God called on Moses to go alone in his strength. But Moses was afraid; he said to God, "I stutter and stammer; I never could make a public speech before a king." And so he refused to go, and he remained a stutterer and a stammerer until he died. What eloquence of speech, such as the world had never heard, was shut up in those uncut leaves of possibility Moses never found out. Suppose John Howard had started back in affright when there was borne in upon his conscience the great privilege and duty of helping to modify the horrors and cruelties of European pris-

ons. He never would have known the compensations and glories which God had written down for him. Suppose Florence Nightingale had shut her eyes to the vision of Mercy brooding above the soldier's cot on the bloody battle-fields of the Crimea, and had remained luxuriously at home in England. The world never would have heard of her, and all that beautiful record of heroic and Christlike service would have been a closed book until now. Let God's message come home to each one of our hearts to-day. It may be that before you there lies a duty undone. God has been rolling it on your conscience. He has been stirring your heart about some unrighted wrong. Your soul is moved to the depths, and yet it seems so hard and the path so blind and so uncertain that you dare not cut the closed leaf of to-morrow and go blindly to do the duty to which God calls you. But you cannot refuse to do your duty without loss, and loss infinitely greater than you are now able to estimate.

Mrs. J. K. Barney, the world-famous prison worker, tells a story which illustrates this great truth. She says that, years ago, she visited a Western town, and the lady who met her at the station said, "You must excuse the miserable old carriage I am going to take you in, for I do not like to employ any other driver." On seeing the uncared-for look of both carriage and horse, with tied-up harness, she did wonder, and still more at the slovenly, red-faced

driver. However, he drove the ladies up to the home of the hostess safely, and as they passed up the walk she stopped to speak to him. Overtaking Mrs. Barney, they entered the house together, and as the door closed she lifted a tearful face to her guest, with the plea, "Will you stop right here and pray for that man?" "What is it?" she asked, for she knew there must be something back of that. As they dropped upon their knees, she sobbed out, "Oh, he used to be in my Sunday-school class." The substance of the story was this: Years before, five boys were gathered into a Sunday-school from the street. They were given into this lady's care, and she felt a pride in showing what she could do. She taught the lesson after a fashion, but with no real conception of personal responsibility; and when sometimes it was urged home upon her that she ought to use her personal friendship and influence with these boys to seriously lead them individually to give their hearts to God and begin the Christian life, she put it from her as too hard a task, and refused to even earnestly consider it. Finally she left home and was away for five years. During her absence, she waked up to the possibilities of Christian service and often thought of her boys. On her return she began a search, and finally came upon this one, the cab-driver, who was noticeably under the influence of liquor. He seemed glad to see her, but shook his head to her proposition to sign a temperance pledge. "It's no use now; you

missed your chance to save me. You could have got me to do that once, but it's too late now." To her inquiries about the other boys, he replied, "Two of us is dead, two of us is in prison, and I ain't worth saving. I tell you, lady, you missed your chance with us." Years had passed away, and try as she would, she had not been able to save the man who as a boy would have been like clay in her hands. My friend, if there is before you the opportunity to do good to some soul, though it be at the cost of personal comfort and self-sacrifice, in God's name I pray you do not fail to cut the leaves of that book of service; the blessings therein are greater than you can dream.

Perhaps you are standing before the closed leaves of the Book of Personal Salvation. As I speak, you are conscious that personally you are a sinner against God, and that you know nothing by experience of the power of Jesus Christ to forgive sin and to bring the breath of a new life of righteousness to the heart. Cut the leaves of that book this very hour!

Lady Ann Erskine was once passing through a London crowd in her carriage. Borne on the breeze, there came to her the voice of a preacher, and she asked her coachman to drive near so that she might hear what he was saying. Rowland Hill it was, and his eye grasped the situation as she drew near. Suddenly he stopped his discourse, and, after a noticeable pause, said: "Listen! Here is a titled lady. The auction of eternity has begun, and there are offers

being made for her of high birth to-night. The devil says, 'I will give pleasure, I will give a presentation to the court, I will give luxury, I will give all the attractions of the world for her!' Will the hammer fall? Hark, there is another voice that bids. It is the voice of Jesus. It says, 'I will give my life for her, I will give my precious blood for her. I that was born the Son of God, that came from glory, will give myself for her sinful and never-dying soul.' What is to be the decision? Who is to get her? Now or never!"

"Drive on," said Lady Erskine to her coachman. But in her room that night, after a great struggle, she put aside high birth and society life and her pride of blood, and accepted Jesus Christ. If she had not done that, that beautiful Christian life which was such a blessing and benediction to her own time would have been forever a sealed book. How shall it be with you? Your Book of Life is within your reach. Will you give your heart to Christ and let him open its leaves for you now?

XIV.

The Secret of a Happy Day.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."—Psalm 25: 14.

Frances Ridley Havergal, whose life and writings have so greatly blessed mankind, and whose poems have often come as a word in season to him that is weary, studied the words of this text until they awoke music in her heart, and she carolled forth one of the most beautiful of all her songs, entitled "The Secret of a Happy Day." Before we study some of the characteristics of a happy day, as outlined by the poet, let us first comfort ourselves with the song itself:

"Just to let thy Father do
What he will;
Just to know that he is true,
And be still.
Just to follow hour by hour
As he leadeth;
Just to draw the moment's power
As it needeth.
Just to trust him, this is all!
Then the day will surely be
Peaceful, whatso'er befall,
Bright and blessed, calm and free.

"Just to let him speak to thee
Through his Word,
Watching, that his voice may be
Clearly heard,
Just to tell him everything,
As it rises,
And at once to him to bring
All surprises.
Just to listen and to stay
Where you cannot miss his voice.
This is all! and thus to-day,
Communing so, you shall rejoice.

"Just to ask him what to do
All the day,
And to make you quickened through
To obey.
Just to know the needed grace
He bestoweth,
Every bar of time and place
Overfloweth.
Just to take thy orders straight
From the Master's own command.
Blessed day! when thus we wait
Always at our Sovereign's hand.

"Just to recollect his love,
Always true;
Always shining from above,
Always new.
Just to recognize its light
All-enfolding;
Just to claim its present might,
All-upholding.
Just to know it as thy own,
That no power can take away;
Is not this enough alone
For the gladness of the day?

"Just to trust, and yet to ask
Guidance still;
Take the training or the task,
As he will.
Just to take the loss or gain
As he sends it;
Just to take the joy or pain
As he lends it;
He who formed thee for his praise
Will not miss the gracious aim;
So to-day and all thy days
Shall be molded for the same.

"Just to leave in his dear hand
Little things;
All we cannot understand,
All that stings.
Just to let him take the care
Sorely pressing,
Finding all we let him bear
Changed to blessing.
This is all! and yet the way
Marked by him who loves thee best:
Secret of a happy day,
Secret of his promised rest."

I am sure we cannot fail to get comfort if we study earnestly some of the rules laid down by this brilliant and spiritual woman as guaranteeing a happy day. The first suggestion is that a rebellious life can never be happy, but that a complete surrender to God is certain to bring peace. This is the first note struck.

"Just to let thy Father do
What he will;

Just to know that he is true,
And be still."

So long as in our thoughts we rebel against the Lord, the spirit will chafe and fret; and however silent we may be about it, there will be no real peace and comfort of soul. But the moment we surrender ourselves completely to God, entirely willing to do what he wishes, accepting his will as the best thing that could happen, all chafing and fretting and discord will cease in our hearts.

Campbell Morgan has coined a new word, or rather, adapted an old one, to bring out the idea of consecration. He says that we ought to "abandon" our lives unto God. He means by this what was meant by the old, much-abused word, "consecration." That is exactly the idea of the poem we are studying. If we just give up our will to God, to do what he asks of us, to accept what he gives us, to throw ourselves with whole-hearted enthusiasm into his purpose for us, then we shall have peace, and we shall have one of the secrets of a happy day.

A second suggestion is that faith in God's providential care cannot fail to give peace. This is put in a very picturesque and suggestive way:

"Just to tell him everything
As it rises,
And at once to him to bring
All surprises."

What a beautiful way of putting it that is, and what

an insight into life it shows! The hardest things for us to bear are the surprises that come to us in the way of disappointment. Some trials we have been anticipating, and we are braced for the shock; but other troubles come upon us like a cyclone on a western prairie. It surely will comfort us to feel that God is not surprised. Any new storm that rises on the horizon, that we have not been looking for, we can turn over to God. The Lord's mercies are new every morning, and they can take care of these new and surprising difficulties. Do not imagine it is all over with you because there comes upon you some sudden weakness or depression of spirit, which makes you cowardly and ready to faint. Did not Elijah break down and go to the desert in the midst of the greatest work of his life? But he came back through God's mercies to greater triumphs.

There is a touching little story of the artist Raphael, that when he was in the midst of his work on what is perhaps the greatest painting ever created by man, the Transfiguration, he was depressed by sudden and awful discouragement. He sat down and burst into tears, and said, "I am not a painter; I cannot complete it." But God was good to him, and after a while the tired nerves were rested, the brain got back its clear vision, the heart was inspired again, and the hand became skilful for the wonderful work of creation. Let God take care of the "surprises."

There is another interesting suggestion here, that in order to find happiness day by day we must have in our hearts the assurance that God will give us added grace at any time we need it for emergencies. A man can be perfectly happy though he feels that to-day he has not the grace to bear some great burden that does not yet rest on his shoulders, provided he believes that God will answer his prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Miss Havergal puts it this way:

> "Just to know the needed grace
> He bestoweth,
> Every bar of time and place
> Overfloweth."

You do not know how to appreciate that poetical figure unless you have known something about steamboating on southern or western rivers. The difficulties of life are compared to sand-bars in the river. When there is a long dry spell, the sand-bar, which is far out of sight in the depth in the full-flood tide of the winter or springtime currents, comes close to the surface in the hot summer months, when the river is low. Here comes the steamer up the river; yonder, just ahead, is the gravel-bar or the sand-bar which the captain fears, and he puts a sailor out on the side of the deck to drop a line weighted with a lump of lead, and to call out the number of feet of water over the bar. If it keeps deep enough to cross the critical point, and begins

to grow deeper again, the captain utters a sigh of relief. That is the figure of the poet. We shall be happy, no matter what sand-bars are ahead of us, if we know, deep down in our hearts, that in times of greater need God will give us more grace, that he will give us enough of the water of life to overflow "every bar of time and place."

Our poet declares that if we would fill each day with gladness, we must keep our hearts warm by reflecting on the personal love of God:

> "Just to recollect his love,
> Always true;
> Always shining from above,
> Always new."

If we keep the great truth of God's love for us constantly alive in our hearts by meditations on his goodness, we shall have a light in us which will illuminate every dark place.

Rev. F. B. Meyer says that one night in London he got into an omnibus, where the darkness was only dimly illuminated by one weak oil lamp. He paid the fare, received a punctured ticket to indicate how far he might go, and being very weary, fell into a kind of uncomfortable doze. Suddenly the inspector, whose habit it is to waylay the omnibuses and leap on them unawares, with the object of testing the honesty of the conductors, sprang on the steps, entered, and asked the passengers to show their tickets. Meyer said to himself, It is quite useless for

you to ask this; for, if we produce them, there is not light enough to indicate whether they have been duly stamped. While he was meditating, he noticed that the man struck a little spring on his breast, and suddenly a globe of delicate glass was filled with the glow of electric light which shone like a star on his face, and on the passengers, and illumined the entire vehicle. It was very significant to notice that the man carried on his own heart and breast the light by which he did his work. It seemed to Dr. Meyer to illustrate the text, "In thy light shall we see light." If we keep our hearts warm in the love of God, so that we are able to exult in the personal consciousness that God loves us, we shall carry with us everywhere a glow by which the darkness will be made light and obscure things become visible.

Another feature of a happy day, according to Miss Havergal, is to realize that life is, after all, a rehearsal, a training; and that the training we get in defeat is just as valuable for the great purposes of life as training given in success. If you are getting ready for a ball game, it makes no difference whether you get beaten in the rehearsal or not, so long as you become skilful in the art of the game. If we thus keep the great end in view, defeat cannot spoil our happiness. We are getting ready for heaven, and wide observation and experience show us that the most beautiful spiritual graces are often, like the lotus flowers in Japan, grown in dark places

of poverty and out of the most forbidding conditions. Who cares for the former surroundings when the beautiful flower is before him? and what will the Christian care when he stands in Zion and before God, with the Master's "well done" in his ears and his hand of loving benediction on his head? We must keep that in our minds if we would make the dark days bright. How well the poet puts it:

"Just to trust, and yet to ask
Guidance still;
Take the training or the task,
As he will.
Just to take the loss or gain
As he sends it;
Just to take the joy or pain
As he lends it."

There is another suggestion, perhaps as important as any we have noticed, in assuring a happy day. That is, to let God take care of the little, gnat-like, mosquito-like annoyances of life. When you eliminate these little petty things through which we so often give up our souls to wrath, we have taken out of the Christian's path a large part of his unhappiness. How beautifully she portrays it:

"Just to leave in his dear hand
Little things;
All we cannot understand,
All that stings."

XV.

A Man who Found a Pot of Gold.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—Matthew 13: 44.

THE story is told of one of the great mining kings of America, who now counts his wealth by many millions of dollars, that he got his start toward great wealth in a peculiar way. He received an intimation that a certain mine which was not regarded very highly by its owners, was nevertheless rich and might be made very profitable. He hired out to work in that mine, working there as a common miner for several months, until he had satisfied himself of its great value. He then went away, sold all that he had and borrowed all he could get trusted for, and bought the mine, deriving from it great profit.

But in the days of Christ all the East, where men and women had been living for hundreds and thousands of years, was more or less a gold field. There were in those days no safe deposit vaults, no banks

where money could be cared for in safety, and very little opportunity to invest hoarded silver or gold in traffic. It was also an uncertain and turbulent world. There was only one way to make sure of wealth, and that was to hide it away. And so it became a common thing to hide gold and silver and precious stones in the earth. To this secret treasure-place the owner would go from time to time, and draw from it the riches that were needed for use. But as the wealth was not safe unless the hiding-place was kept secret, it would naturally occur very frequently that the sudden death of the one who had hidden the treasure would leave the secret of the hiding-place unknown. It was a warlike time, and predatory bands of robbers and invasions of an enemy would ever and anon drive the people from their homes. Many a man dying in battle would thus have no opportunity to make known to his friends the secret hiding-place of his treasure; and thus it became true, as Thomas Guthrey says, that "The earth became a bank in which was accumulated during the course of ages a vast amount of unclaimed deposits."

So you see the story which Jesus brought to these people was full of teaching to them. There was not a man who heard him who, if called upon to testify, could not have borne witness to similar cases that had come under his own observation. Here is a man who lives down in the village. He

has his little house and home plot, and his team, but is not able to own a field yet. He rents a field on the shares. One morning he goes out to plough with his rude, old-fashioned, wooden plough, pulled through the earth slowly by a yoke of oxen. He is busy holding the plough in its place, so that it will scratch up the earth as much as possible, when, suddenly, the point of the plough strikes something hard, and nearly throws him over on the oxen as they lunge forward. He supposes that it is a stone; but as he digs the earth away his eyes stand out in astonishment, for he sees that his plough has torn into a bag of gold, and there are the rich coins before his eyes. He does not need to be told what has happened: he knows that here is an old unclaimed treasure, and that under the law it would belong to any man who owns the field. He is full of joy, but he is also full of fear and anxiety. He looks all around very stealthily. No one is in sight, no one has noticed his rich find. Carefully he replaces the sod, putting everything back so that it will look as before, carefully sticking the old plough in place, as though he had naturally left the field to go on some other business, and then hurries his oxen away to town. When he arrives there, he astonishes people with his efforts to sell out. He sells out his house and lot, sells his furniture, his oxen, sells everything he owns in the world. Of course, such forced sales never bring full value, and

his neighbors think the man must be crazy to squander his goods in this way. But he knows what he is about; he has priced the field before and knows what he can buy it for; and when, by forcing a sale on all his possessions, he secures the needed sum, he hurries away to the owner and buys the field. The people still say he is crazy. How is he going to live on that field without any house, and how is he going to work it without oxen? But all their hootings soon turn to admiration and praise. For as soon as the man gets a deed to the place, he goes back and upturns his rich treasure, and forever after his family are able to live in a much better house, and to enjoy more of comfort and luxury than they have ever dreamed of knowing before. Everybody agrees now that he was indeed a wise man when he sold all that he had, even at a sacrifice, to buy the field in which he had found the hidden treasure.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ says that the kingdom of heaven is like that—that when we give up all our sins, and all our own selfish ambitions, and take him to be not only our Saviour, but our Lord and King, we exchange poverty for great riches; that there is no better investment, indeed there is no investment in the world so good, as for a man to sell all that he has to depend upon and put his trust in Jesus Christ. And this is true from whatever standpoint you may look at the matter. Wealth is only a symbol of

comfort and happiness, and when it fails to bring these it is a worthless thing; yet at how many points in life it does fail. But Jesus Christ has the power to give to our hearts a blessed comfort and peace which are beyond anything the greatest riches of the world can possibly bestow. He is the one friend that has power to comfort us in every emergency of life. The wealth which he gives us is the one sort of wealth which is honored everywhere, and can give a silver lining to every cloud in our experience.

Dr. George C. Lorimer once ran into a blizzard in North Carolina when he was traveling on a lecture trip. The storm was sudden and unexpected, and so unusually severe that it caused great suffering. The train was delayed, and a number of passengers were obliged to wait on a side-track in an ordinary coach for several hours. Dr. Lorimer saw one man with his head bowed on the back of the seat before him. Finally, becoming hungry and impatient, the doctor moved up and down the car a few times, and then went outside to walk up and down the track. As he passed along, he came near three or four gentlemen, and overheard one of them say to another, "It is very sad." Dr. Lorimer said to himself, "Yes, it is sad to have all our plans upset in this way," and walked on. As he came around again in his walk, he heard one old gentleman remark, "But he don't complain." Then he tramped on again, saying, "There is one amiable person on

board, then, who does not complain." As he came back once more, he heard the man say, very solemnly, "And he doesn't charge God foolishly." Then Dr. Lorimer stopped and said, "Tell me, brother, who is this delightful soul we have on board who can stay on a side-track all these hours and yet retain his equilibrium?" "Don't you know?" they all cried. "That man in there with the bowed head. He is a railroad man. He came home about four o'clock this morning from trying to clear some of the tracks, and he was cold. As he entered the house, he threw off his wraps, and his wife said, 'Come and go to bed.' He went to bed, and waking after two or three hours, put his hand over on his wife, to find her dead! Her body is in the baggage car!" This was the man who had been so terribly smitten, who was yet submissive to God's will, who did not complain and did not charge God foolishly. Surely that man had a hidden treasure of hope and confidence worth more than all the wealth in the world. No wonder Paul calls that kind of peace "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

And yet to many people this treasure is hidden. It is not only the heathen world, which has never heard about Jesus, to whom it is hidden; but here in our own country, and in our own city, and to some who read this, Christ is a hidden treasure which they have not yet discovered. It is not that they have

not heard about him; it is probable that they cannot remember the time when they first heard about Christ as the Saviour. Back in their childhood, among their first memories, are recollections of prayers and songs and books and papers that were full of teaching about Jesus. They have been taught in the Sunday-school and have heard sermons in the church, until they have perhaps been ready to say that they know as much about Christ as does any one; yet the truth is that Christ is as unknown to them as was that hidden treasure to the poor farmer until his plough turned up the gold before his eyes. For to know Christ only as a historical character, as one may know Napoleon or Washington or General Grant, is not to know at all the deep, precious treasure that fills the heart with peace, banishes sin, and inspires to noble and holy deeds.

Christ does not become the real treasure of your life until he becomes your personal Saviour in a sense as near and as certain as it would be if you were the only man living in the world for whom he died. When you come to really see Christ coming from heaven to be your Saviour, see him as he is hungry and misunderstood and beaten, and finally as he is nailed to the cross, and realize that it is for you; when you follow him to the grave, watch and wait with agony and suspense until the angel comes down from heaven on Easter morning, and the keepers fall like dead men when Christ comes out of

the tomb in glorious victory, and realize that that means immortality for you; when you look up to heaven, as Stephen did, and see your Saviour sitting on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and realize that he is your High Priest, and that he "ever liveth to make intercession" for you,—only then do you perceive in the fullest sense how Christ has become your real treasure. Thus beholding him, your sins seem horrible to you, and you obey him and come and fall down on your knees before the mercy-seat, and cry out in repentance, and beg his forgiveness, and take him to be your Saviour and your Lord. And the Lord says to you, as he said to one whom he blessed while here in the flesh, "According to your faith be it unto you," and all your sins are gone, and all your heart is filled with joy. It is this personal love of Christ which I offer you as the greatest treasure that you can have as a personal possession.

Frank Weaver, an English evangelist, tells this very interesting story of a conversion: The story may be said to begin in South Africa, where, after the battle of Spion Kop, three British soldiers who were wounded in the battle lay in the hospital. Of the three, two were brothers and were Roman Catholics, and the third was a Protestant. One of the Romanists and the Protestant were dying of their wounds. The Romanist was telling his beads, and the Protestant asked the reason.

"Because," was the reply, "I am a good Catholic."

"Indeed," said the Protestant soldier. "Well, I once heard Richard Weaver preach at Rotherhite, and he said that it is not being a Roman Catholic or a Protestant that saves us; it is having 'Christ for me;' and for my part I can say it: 'It's Christ for me.'"

Both men passed away. The third, the surviving Romanist, recovering, was sent home as an invalid, and in relating his war experiences to his family circle at Deptford he told the story of this hospital incident. A few weeks afterward two of his sisters, who were also Romanists, were passing along a street in the vicinity of their home, when they saw a placard announcing that the Weaver brothers, sons of Richard Weaver, were to preach and sing that night at the East Greenwich Tabernacle. One of the young women was much impressed, and said, "These are the sons of the 'Christ for me' man. I'll go to hear them."

She did so, and the Spirit of God carried the message straight to her heart. At the close of the sermon she went into the inquiry room, where she was pointed to the Saviour. Although she had been a member of the Roman Catholic Church all her life, the knowledge of having Christ as a personal treasure in her heart had been to her like the treasure hidden in the field; but in that inquiry room she

caught a vision of him, and gave up all she had of earthly confidence and took this rich treasure as her all in all. As she left the tabernacle that evening, she joyfully said, "It's Christ for me."

She now felt it her duty to tell the priest that she was no longer a Romanist. Accordingly she called on the priest, who was greatly concerned.

"Why have you done this?" he asked.

"Because," she replied, "it's not being a Roman Catholic or a Protestant that saves us, but it is having 'Christ for me.'"

"You cannot prove that," rejoined the priest.

"Perhaps I cannot," she said; "but it's 'Christ for me.'"

The young woman was employed in connection with the wardrobe or dressing department at one of the London theaters, and her forewoman was a Roman Catholic. The priest, being aware of this, instructed the forewoman to dismiss the convert immediately. He thought that would scare her into giving up her new faith. The sequel, however, did not satisfy his reverence.

"I can do nothing with her," said the forewoman. "She says, 'It's Christ for me.'"

"But you must stop her," urged the priest.

"It's no use at all," was the reply. "I tell you, she says, 'It's Christ for me;' and as Christ is both your Master and mine, I can do no more."

But the priest was more successful among her

own people, and succeeded in having her driven away from home. Yet in spite of all her sorrows and troubles she went on her way rejoicing, telling her friends, "It isn't being a Roman Catholic, or a Protestant; it's having 'Christ for me.'"

It is a salvation like that I bring to you. I want you to have Christ personally as your own treasure, in which you can rejoice through all the troubles which may come to you in this world, and at last find in him a glorious immortality in the world beyond.

XVI.

The Right Setting for Spiritual Diamonds.

"Let not then your good be evil spoken of."—Romans 14: 16.

THE theory of the text is that a splendid jewel requires an appropriate setting. A fine picture should have a good frame. A book of wisdom deserves to be handsomely bound. As one would not put a diamond in a setting of brass or iron, so goodness, which is the most splendid jewel of human character, ought not to have a setting that will cause it to be misjudged and slandered. Some one has well said that character is timeliness, a fine perception of what is becoming to the person, to the place, to the hour. If we do not attend to this our mirthfulness may be reckoned levity, our strictness intolerance, our liberality weakness, our large-mindedness license. We have need to pray constantly that we may be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom;" so shall we serve the apples of gold in the

basket of silver. We cannot afford to despise this matter. We cannot say, "Let us get the solid thing, and never mind the rest." A jeweller may work altogether with gold and gems; but it is not enough to mix these indiscriminately. So we, as Christians, must be careful how we arrange our precious material, for of the virtues we may make either a loathsome eyesore or a charming picture. We must work with judgment, sympathy, courtesy, or our good will be evil spoken of. A man may be a lifetime building up a beautiful character and establishing a noble reputation before the world; and yet, nothing is so easily tarnished or destroyed as a good reputation. The act of a single moment may disfigure it and make it ugly. A breath of gossip or scandal may blast it, an indiscretion may tarnish it, a single hour's dozing and failure to be on the alert, watchful to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, may prove to be the "dead fly" in the ointment that may make it offensive.

I do not wish to be misunderstood as confounding character and reputation. They do not mean the same thing. Character is what we are, and reputation is what men think us to be. But it is very important that a good man, who has a good character, shall so live with reference to the rest of the world that his character shall have the proper reputation. We owe this to God and to our fellow men. Of course there are times when a man, in

order to keep his character, must give up his reputation. Then there should be no hesitation. In the long run, however, even in this world, a man's character and his reputation will be the same. Yet it is possible for a man conscious of goodness and of righteous principles to be so careless of his presentation of himself to the world, that he makes his goodness unattractive and causes it to be spoken of in an evil way. I am sure this is a very important theme, and a very practical one, and I pray God we may find in it a message which may help us in our every-day life.

There are a number of points illustrated in the New Testament teaching where this truth is brought out with great clearness.

Take the question of *personal freedom.* That word freedom is a beautiful word in our language and in our history. It is one of our precious jewels. We count it as a diamond of the first water. And yet freedom may be harsh and cruel, and be exceedingly harmful in its results, unless it be exercised in the grace of brotherly sympathy. Brotherly sympathy is the setting for freedom.

The text which we are studying just now came to be spoken on that account. Paul says: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean in itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest

thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died."

This is the Christian spirit, that the strong must ever hold themselves as yoked together with the weak, over whom they have an influence. It is this reason that causes many a man of cool, quiet temperament, who feels that it would be safe for him to drink wine with moderation, to lay aside his freedom at this point, because his neighbor is like a magazine of gunpowder, to whom a glass of wine is the fuse that brings on a deadly explosion.

General Nelson A. Miles, at the head of the American army, was asked one day why he did not take wine at public dinners. His answer was very quiet and simple: "I have a son who is a young man. If I drink he will drink also. Therefore I do not drink." There was a brave, strong man giving up his freedom through love, for fear that the use of his liberty might bring another into bondage.

Faith is one of the three most enduring graces. And yet faith often seems cold and unlovable unless it be bathed in the warm glow of gratitude and thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the only setting appropriate for faith. You may find a good illustration of this in the case of the ten lepers who came to Christ for healing. He sent them all away with the same directions for their cleansing, and they were all recovered from their malady. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and

with a loud voice glorified God; and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Now these lepers were all good men up to a certain point; they all had faith, or else they would not have been healed. But only one had the beautiful grace of expressing his gratitude for the unspeakable blessing he had received. I fear that there are many of us guilty at this point. We are guilty among our fellows. How easy it is to drink in kind words and kind deeds every day, and yet express no thanksgiving, no gratitude; or, if we do, express it in so formal a way that it hurts more than it blesses. We all need to be on our guard at this point. Many persons, without intending it, come to be huge sponges that suck up all the blessing and helpfulness that they can get out of their homes and their places of business, but take it as a matter of course, and do not seem to understand that the very life-blood of men and women and children is being absorbed by them, and they go days and weeks without once saying "Thank you" in a way to make the heart beat quicker and to flood a weary heart with sunshine. The world of good people needs a baptism of gratitude more than anything else—a quick eye to appreciate kindness in an-

other, an alert observation to see the loving purpose that failed, it may be, in the execution. We must not let men and women do things for us as a matter of course. There is no matter of course between immortal beings. Even though we pay men and women wages, we cannot buy souls. We cannot hire the personality of the sons of God. There is a divine glow, a halo that is a part of the reward of true service, and that is thanksgiving. And though a man get his wages, if he fail of this he is cheated.

But this truth has a much wider range. No man can be ungrateful to his fellow men and be truly grateful to God. The man who takes things as a matter of course from his wife and children, his neighbors, or employés, will soon take things as a matter of course from God. Many a man's religious life dies out and loses all its sweetness and beauty, because he has lost that intense sense of personal gratitude which he owes to God. A German who had been converted told his neighbor one morning: "Everybody is rejoicing at our house. My wife is rejoicing, I am rejoicing, my Saviour is rejoicing. Last night I went in to kiss my little children good night. As I was standing there, my wife said to me, 'Dear husband, you love these our children very dearly, but it is not a thousandth part as much as the blessed Saviour loves us.'" Brother, how much do you owe to God for the infinite love that sought you out as a sinner and healed you of your sins? What

are you doing to let all the world know your gratitude and thanksgiving to him for his great mercy?

Mercy, although it is one of the divinest emotions or deeds, will fail of its sweetest mission unless exercised with cheerfulness. Paul expresses this well when he says: "He that showeth mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness." I think people sin at this point perhaps more frequently than at almost any other. It is possible to do a kind deed in such a way that the person who has received the favor will never think of it again without doubling up the fist or gritting the teeth. It is possible to rob the good deed of all its divine beauty and make it a hateful thing, when it ought to be as lovely as an angel's visit.

A young fellow just out of college tells the story of two women, each the wife of a professor in the college he attended. Both of these women threw open their homes in a generous way and sought to be helpful to the students who were away from home. One family was rich, and the other was in very moderate circumstances. The rich woman gave very elaborate entertainments, and the material blessings received there far surpassed anything that was ever found in the other house. But elaborate as these entertainments were, the lady gave them in a cold and formal way, and seemed to feel that she was doing a great thing and taking on herself heavy burdens for the sake of the young men.

At the other house everything was different. Everything was informal and simple; there was no attempt at display, and no extravagant or expensive viands. But the young men never went there without finding the cheerful face of a sympathetic, kindly woman, who made them feel that nothing gave her more happiness and delight than to charm away their lonesomeness and strengthen them for their work. And so it was the woman without money, and without the material assistance which money could bring, who was the idol of that college. Both women were doing a merciful deed, but the one gave her deed the setting of cheerfulness.

A lady in a hurry, walking down the street, ran against a little boy, and almost knocked him down. She stopped, really anxious, and begged his pardon. She was a beautiful woman, with a face full of kindness, and as she smiled down on the little fellow carried out of himself and forgetting his timidity in the charm of her eyes, he exclaimed, "You may knock me down again if you'll smile on me like that." She could not have had a better compliment. Her apology had the true setting that made it heal all hurts. Let us take the message home to our own hearts. In the give and take of life every day, in the home, in the street, in the store, in society, in the church, we are always running against one another, and we have to be merciful to one another—and we

are, in a way. But, dear friends, let us do it in the right way. Show your mercy with cheerfulness.

Rightful authority may be robbed of all that suggests simply brutal force by true Christian courtesy. The only place in the Bible where that word "courteous" is used (though the adverb is used in two other places), is by Peter, in talking about the authority in family and household government, and there he urges that those who are in such authority "be courteous." The word courteous is derived from the term "court," and is used in its primitive sense to describe that refinement of manners which ought to prevail in the palaces of princes and distinguish the intercourse of the great. Christian courtesy is based on the idea of benevolence or goodwill toward men; a desire to promote the happiness of others. Some one calls courtesy "benevolence in trifles." Surely, whatever you may call it, it has the power to sweeten human life, and nowhere more than in the home. I fear many of us are sinners there in the matter of true and genuine Christian courtesy. Men should be courteous to their wives, and wives should be courteous to their husbands. Parents should be courteous to their children, and children should be trained to show courtesy to each other. The employer who is courteous toward his employés gains a real power which no fear can ever give him.

When the Duke of Wellington was ill unto death,

the last thing he took was a little tea. On his servant's handing it to him in a saucer, and asking him if he would have it, the duke replied, "Yes, if you please." These were his last words. How much true courtesy is expressed by them! He who had commanded the greatest armies in Europe did not forget the small courtesies of life. True courtesy is Christianity's halo thrown over the rugged skeleton of power.

Truth may become so warped as to be practically falsehood unless spoken in the spirit of love. Paul declared that we ought to speak the truth in love. We would never find a better illustration of this than in the tender grace with which Jesus opened the wounded heart of the wicked woman of Samaria in order that he might save her soul. That ought to be a lesson to us. If you have a delicate and sad truth to speak, do not go blurting it out so that it will hurt as though a rock had come crashing through the window, and cut a gash in your forehead and hurled you to the ground, but study out the kindest and most loving way in which you may speak that truth, so that it may heal while it wounds. Christ wounded that Samaritan woman to the very heart, but his love healed her and left her pure and happy. God help us to imitate our Lord! Never speak an unwelcome truth to any one unless you do it lovingly. It is not always necessary to speak. There are some truths that it is not our business to speak.

Sometimes the most loving thing we can do is to keep our mouths shut and be silent. But if it is our duty to speak a truth which we know will hurt, never allow any enmity or jealousy or anger to be mixed up with such speech. This would give it a false setting. Truth is a diamond for which only love can be the setting. Speak the truth in love or else be silent. Many parents would keep control of their children, and be able to lead them to the mercy seat and up to heaven at last, if they would only make sure never to speak an unpleasant truth except when love has complete control.

I am sure we must feel after this study that God is ever seeking to make well-rounded, charming Christian men and women out of us. How beautiful is Peter's estimate of the growing splendor of a true Christian life: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," i.e., love.

XVII.

A Soul Among Lions—A Study of Browning's "Saul."

"My soul is among lions."—Psalm 57: 4.

One of Shakespeare's characters, describing the reckless attack of certain desperadoes, says they

> "like lions wanting food,
> Do rush upon us as their hungry prey."

David says that he found the temptations and trials of life to be of that sort. He was reverent toward God, and was seeking to do the will of God; but that did not save him from the lionlike assaults of his enemies. Let no one imagine that goodness is a guarantee against the trials and temptations of this world. Christ was tempted and tried. He spent forty days in the wilderness with the wild beasts. Satan assailed him as a roaring lion, seeking to devour him, and we must not expect to be greater than our Lord. The greatest and noblest men and women that have ever lived have endured great trials, and have indeed grown great through their trials.

Some one, quoting a remark of Bishop Andrews, made in a recent sermon, that "The man who has the Pauline spirit will have the Pauline success," says that it sounds well. It looks well in print, and by many will be assented to without a question. But what was "Pauline success"? Crowded churches? Wonderful revivals? A mighty, triumphant ministry? Paul, indeed, did have great revivals, and won large numbers of men to become Christians. But let us not forget that he won a good many other things which it would test our pluck to carry off with us. He won five floggings at the public whipping-post. He won a beating on a number of occasions. He won being stoned until he was left unconscious. He won imprisonment and desertion and slander. And, finally, to cap it all, he won a chance to lay his head over an executioner's block and have it severed from his body. Paul won great glory and a great crown which will be a joy in heaven forever, but he knew what David meant when he said, "My soul is among lions."

Now we all know what it means to be beset by difficulties and temptations and sorrows, until it seems to us that we are in a very lions' den. It is not to harrow your feelings by recounting the deep sorrows and trials of life that I have recalled this theme, but rather to point the way out of the lions' den. For if you will read all this Psalm, you will find

that though David starts out in the depths of gloom, and seems to be lying on red-hot fagots, with roaring lions crouching to spring upon him with hungry teeth and sharp claws, yet in the very act of pouring out his soul to God the consciousness of God relieves him, and he closes his Psalm with an anthem of thanksgiving. The lions are still there; the nets still wait in the path to entrap his feet; the gaping pit is still open; wicked men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and slanderers whose tongues are like sharp swords, still dog his footsteps. But he rises above it all, in the consciousness that God is above all and over all, and that so long as his heart is fixed on God no real harm can come to him.

I have recently been re-studying one of the strongest pictures in human literature, dealing with this problem of how the human soul shall get out of its den of lions. I mean Robert Browning's "Saul." Many of you have read it, and it will repay all of you to read it many times. Saul is among lions; he is in the depths of despair, and fearing for his very life his officers have sent for David, the young shepherd poet, the young man with the harp and with a soul of music, and the chief officer meets him on his approach with rapturous welcome.

> "Said Abner, 'At last thou art come! ere I tell, ere thou speak,
> Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he: 'Since the king, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the king liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servant, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that faint in his triumph the monarch sinks back upon life.
Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child! with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!'"

Then David knelt down to the God of his fathers and humbly prayed for help. The prayer ended, he ran to the tent-door of the king, and went in on his message of mercy and helpfulness. He began to sing of the beautiful in nature and in life. He played the melodies of the hills and fields and herds, that were so dear to that shepherd nation. Says David:

"Then I tuned my harp—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us—so blue and so far!"

Saul listened in silence that was stark, blind, and dumb. The music, sweet though it was, did not reach the depths of agony in the soul of the tempted and troubled man. David changes the tune:

"Then the tune for which the quails on the corn-land will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house."

But the music which charmed the birds, and told of the life of all the gay creatures of nature, had no charm for the haunted soul of the king. Then David turned to the life of man, and sought to win the king by the varied experiences of his fellow men.

"Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand,
And grow one in the sense of this world's life. And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—'Bear, bear him along,
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!' And then, the glad chant
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends! Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned."

Neither the song of the woods, of the reapers, the funeral hymn, the wedding song, nor the chant of the Levites at worship could rouse Saul. Neither the beauty nor the interest of human life could help the poor king, weighed down and depressed in the depth of life's melancholy.

Again David changes the music. This time he sings of the pleasure of manly strife and success. He sings of the joy there is in work accomplished and in glory achieved. With enthusiasm he bursts forth:

"Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,

And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught
of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword
thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious
reward?

* * * * * * *

"And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder
and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's
scope—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine:
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head
combine!"

And yet with all this David fails to comfort the king. So he nerves himself for a still higher flight of song, and sings to him of the glory of fame. He tells the king that his name shall live forever in the history of the country; he shall have a splendid tomb, and the great shaft that rises above it shall be graven with mighty deeds, and he shall be loved and reverenced forever. He calls upon Saul to take a long draught of soul-wine and

"Look forth o'er the years!
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with
the seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depths of the vale make his tomb—bid
arise

A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square till, built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers; whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe. Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

Even this great appeal to Saul's ambition and love of fame and power does not rouse the king from that deep den of misery in which his lions are tormenting him. Then David is illuminated in mind and heart with a new truth. He sings of a new life, a life renewed, a life seized hold upon by divine power and lifted up out of the mire of sin and doubt, and given a glory hitherto unknown. And now he sings to Saul of the God who will

"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul—the mistake
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life—a new harmony yet
To be run and continued and ended—who knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss
And the next world's reward and repose by the struggles in this."

And thus it was that David lifted Saul out of his den of lions. It is the music of the new life, the spiritual life, the immortal life, the consciousness that the battle with lions here has something to do with fitting us for the flight with angels yonder, that can nerve us and make us strong to endure, and cause us to rejoice with David in the midst of life's sorrows and persecutions. No man, no woman, can keep a brave and cheerful heart amidst the roaring lions of earth, unless the sky above has flashing into it the sunshine of eternity. All the beauty of nature, all the exultation and pleasure of living, all the more intoxicating joys and achievements of ambition, all the glory of fame and power—these are not enough to give a man triumph over the lions of sorrow, temptation and disappointment that beset him in this world. We must have the conviction that this life is only the prelude to another life, only the vestibule to a more glorious career. Christ came to make us

sure of that life; he came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. Browning's great faith, that made it possible for him to sing this song of "Saul," is a faith in Jesus Christ. The difficulties and troubles of life, the shadows of death, the mysteries of the future, were all aglow with a wonderful brightness to the great poet, because he saw them all in the "Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Christ revealed to him a God willing to suffer for his children if he might save them. Listen to David's nobler song:

"Would I suffer for him that I love? so wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being beloved!
He who did most shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

This, then, is my message: that the only way to live cheerfully and triumphantly in this life of temptation and trial is to live conscious of the nearness of God in Christ Jesus. The saintly McCheyne was accustomed to say to his people, "For every look you give within at yourself, give ten looks without at Jesus Christ."

A man who was for a long time shut up in Libby Prison says that they used to console themselves by frequently singing the doxology, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Day after day they saw comrades passing away, and their numbers increasing by fresh living recruits for the grave. One night, about 10 o'clock, through the stillness and the darkness they heard the tramp of coming feet that soon stopped before the prison door until arrangements could be made inside. In the company was a young Baptist minister, whose heart almost fainted as he looked on those cold walls and thought of the suffering inside. Tired and weary, he sat down, put his face in his hands and wept. Just then a lone voice of deep, sweet pathos sung out from an upper window,

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,"

and a dozen manly voices joined in the second line,

"Praise him, all creatures here below;"

then by the time the third was reached more than a

score of hearts were full, and joined to send the words on high,

"Praise him above, ye heavenly host;"

by this time the prison was all alive and seemed to quiver with the sacred song, as from every room and cell those brave men sang,

"Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!"

As the song died out on the still night that enveloped in darkness the doomed city of Richmond, the young man arose and happily began himself to sing:

"Prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there."

XVIII.

The Special Phases of Christianity Demanded by the New Century.

"The first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle."—Ezekiel 10: 14.

Out of all this wonderful vision of wheels and cherubim, of wings and living creatures, I seize upon a single illustration to suggest my theme. All the vision resolves itself into one picture for our purpose. For us there is one great wheel, the wheel of advancing civilization, always turning, forever and forever in a whirl. In the midst of this there is a living creature, the Christian religion, which is seeking to master and control the civilization of the world. And this living creature, Christianity, has four faces. I see in them the four special phases of Christianity which the world needs in this new century upon which we are entering.

If we are to follow the faces in their order, we must first note that there is great need in our time for a thoughtful Christianity. I follow John Milton's lead, and interpret the face of the cherub to

mean the face of thoughtfulness or contemplation. In his poem, "Il Penseroso," he sings:

> "But first and chiefest, with thee bring
> Him that yon soars on golden wing,
> Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
> The cherub Contemplation."

There is great need to-day to lay emphasis on a religion that has a deep current. The two extremes where we are most in danger in our religious life are a religion which is only theoretical, in which the head only is concerned, and on the other hand a religion that is entirely emotional, which depends and lives upon the feelings. Both are dangerous. No religion of the head, simply, can ever master and enrich a human life. The real power of control is in the heart rather than in the head. And yet a religion that is only emotional, that has no intelligent consideration to sustain it, is likely to be merely temporary. What we need is a religion which conquers not only the head but the heart. Paul was a great example of the powerful and victorious Christian for all ages. A man with a clear head, who was always ready to give a reason for the hope that was in him, and yet a man of large heart, of generous sympathies, who could pour out his soul to a runaway slave, or lie on his back and sing psalms and shout glory at midnight in a dungeon. In Paul we see a marvelous illustration of a man whose Christianity ran in a

deep, strong, full current of divine life. His thought, his feeling, every stream of life, joined in the one great current of his Christian career. We need such Christians in the world to-day. The Christianity that is only intellectual will gain no real power over the masses of men. We must have a religion where the head joins with the heart in seeking to conquer the world for Christ. Modern Christianity must recall some things, I am sure, before we can have the spiritual contemplation which we need. We must have our secret prayer as the fathers did; there must be a family altar in every Christian home; the emphasis must be laid upon religion in the home and on the cultivation of deep and earnest personal piety. The fires of Christianity will burn anew when we can say like David, "While I was musing the fire burned." There are deep visions of spiritual things that can only come to the heart which muses and meditates.

Frances Ridley Havergal, when somebody asked her who our own Fanny Crosby was, replied, "She is a blind lady whose heart can see splendidly in the sunshine of God's love." And in her song which she sent to Miss Crosby she brings out the thought very clearly:

> "Oh, her heart can see, her heart can see!
> And its sight is strong and swift and free.
> Never the ken of mortal eye
> Could pierce so deep and far and high

As the eagle vision of hearts that dwell
In the lofty, sunlit citadel
Of faith that overcomes the world,
With banners of hope and joy unfurled,
Garrisoned with God's perfect peace,
Ringing with pæans that never cease,
Flooded with splendor bright and broad,
The glorious light of the love of God.

"Her heart can see, her heart can see!
Well may she sing so joyously!
For the King himself, in his tender grace,
Hath shown her the brightness of his face:
And who shall pine for a glow-worm light
When the sun goes forth in his radiant might?
She can read his law, as a shining chart,
For his finger hath written it on her heart;
She can read his love, for on all her way
His hand is writing it every day.
'Bright cloud' indeed must that darkness be
Where 'Jesus only' the heart can see.

"Her heart can see! Her heart can see,
Beyond the glooms and the mystery,
Glimpses of glory not far away,
Nearing and brightening day by day;
Golden crystal and emerald bow,
Lustre of pearl and sapphire glow,
Sparkling river and healing tree,
Evergreen palms of victory,
Harp and crown and raiment white,
Holy and beautiful dwellers in light;
A throne, and One thereon, whose face
Is the glory of that wondrous place."

The second face is "the face of a man," which may suggest to us that the Christianity of our time

needs to be intensely human, and to make much of the brotherhood of man. Nothing human must be uninteresting to modern Christianity. No man must be so high or rich or powerful that we shall not measure him by, and demand from him obedience to, the standards of righteousness set up by Jesus Christ. No man has sunk so low into poverty and sin and misery, no man is locked in dungeon cell so dark, but we must follow him with the sympathy and the divine compassion of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must hold out to him the same hope that Christ offered to lost men and women in his own time. We must see the possible brother and sister of Jesus Christ in every man and woman we meet. However long they may have sinned against God's mercy, and however disappointing they may be, we must recognize the fact that they are our brothers and sisters; that Jesus Christ is as much interested in them as he is in us; and that it is not only the supreme duty, but the supreme privilege of our lives, to make Christian brotherhood real to the people who need it most.

Modern Christianity must accept the fact that we are peculiarly our brother's keepers. We must not shirk our opportunity to protect the poor and hold out a guiding hand to the weak, by turning over the great forces of government to corrupt and wicked hands. We must realize more clearly that impure water, careless or corrupt food inspection, improper

sanitary conditions, a careless or a criminal police, unjust taxation, all press most sorely on the backs of the poor and the weak, who are the peculiar wards —nay, use a kindlier word, the younger brothers and sisters—of modern Christianity. The church of Jesus Christ must have a sympathetic ear for every cry that comes from the tenement house, for every cry from the weak, the sick, and the overburdened of every kind. We must not, we dare not, have ears that are only ready to listen to the rich and the strong, while the toiling masses cry out in vain for a hearing. Christianity is not to be partisan, but it is to be brotherly. The rich man and the poor man are our brothers, and we must deal as justly and sympathetically with the one as with the other. We must bring each of them into the fellowship of our great Elder Brother, Jesus Christ. I am sure that what is needed to-day to catch the ear of the world and attract the eye of humanity is to make our modern Christianity intensely human, stretching out a brother's warm hand, speaking the word of comfort and of fellowship, breaking down caste and class, and bringing Christ in our own selves into close, hand-to-hand, elbow-to-elbow, face-to-face, heart-to-heart, human fellowship.

Then there is "the face of the lion." That can only mean that our Christianity must have the courage of its convictions. The church has never made anything by pulling down her standards of right-

eousness. A superficial Christianity, which makes no claims and no demands upon human life that are higher than those of the world, will have no influence, and nobody will respect it. If we are to have a mighty influence on this generation, which will help to destroy the works of the devil and set up the kingdom of God with its peace and good will to all men, we must have the face of a lion. Christianity must drop the tone of apology for its existence. Man belongs to God, not to the devil. Christianity is not an interloper trying to proselyte a man away from what is the natural and normal course of his life. Holiness is the natural atmosphere for the human heart. No man will ever have perfect peace and contentment of soul, no man will ever rise up to do the noblest deeds that are possible to him, until he breathes that atmosphere. Sin is an invader, and all the wickedness there is in the world is an invasion of the evil one. Christianity must stand on its rights. Every human soul belongs to God. Every man and woman in the world has been ransomed and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The saloon, the brothel, the gambling hell, and all these roystering camps of the devil are invasions in God's world.

The church of Jesus Christ stands in the modern city as the righteous fortress of the Most High. We are here not to stand on the defense, not to sit down behind the walls that our fathers built and sing

"Hold the fort," but to be an aggressive army of conquest. We must make war, stern and hot, upon everything which lays a polluting and destroying hand upon the sons and daughters of God. The church must make no peace with the hosts of the devil. There must be no truce between us and the liquor traffic. Modern Christianity must patch up no compromises and carry no white flags of truce in dealing with the institutions that prey upon the bodies and the souls of men and women. We must share the fate of Jesus Christ in the world. We must tell the truth about Jesus. We must live the truth about Jesus; and if that is unpopular, then with the lion-face we must endure unpopularity until in the strength of God we conquer. Better a thousand times to be temporarily defeated as a lion, honestly and bravely standing for righteousness, than to be fed like a jackal on the miserable refuse flung to cowards that desert their Lord. A brave Christianity, with the kind of courage that has been illustrated in every triumphant day of the faith, would conquer the modern world for our Divine Lord, and lift cruel burdens from the shoulders of suffering men and women.

And then there is "the face of the eagle," which must suggest to us the upward look, and the hope which dares to believe that everything good enough to be true in God's world can be true to the children of God. Humanity must go onward. "In we are,

and on we must." We must not gauge what we are to do for Christ in the future by what we have done in the past. There are better days to come. Like the eagle, we are to soar above the mountains, to shout exultingly in the face of the sky, to bathe ourselves in the warm sunlight of the glorious upper air. We must not think for a moment that because a vicious and evil institution is old and gray with antiquity, therefore it is forever to thwart God's purpose and block the wheels of righteousness. No, indeed; we must have the face of the eagle, must realize that we live in an age of wonders and of miracle-work. This is not the age of the ox-team or of the canvas-backed prairie schooner, when news goes by four-horse stage or sailing vessels. This is the age of the palace-car and the lightning express train, the age of the telephone and the cable and the steam ferry, the age of the automobile and the X-rays. It must not be expected that moral movements are to crawl with snail-like sluggishness in such an atmosphere as we are breathing to-day. It is a time when every good thing is possible, a time when no wrong can hide in the dark very long, a time when the electric light of investigation and research is hunting out the hidden things of darkness, making it possible for wrongs to be righted and iniquity to be destroyed with a swiftness that was never possible before.

Let us thank God and take courage. Every invention, every gain in power to use the natural

world, helps on the mission of Jesus Christ. Christ's mission is the salvation of men and women in body and mind and heart, in home and business and government. Everything which quickens the possibility of every man's knowing every other man's need, which lengthens the arm of the strong to reach afar to bring help and protection to the weak, is opening the path for Christ and hastening his divine victory among men. The railroad, the telephone, the cable, the newspaper—all of these are helpers of the divine evangel, in that they make it impossible for wickedness to hide, or for any man long to suffer unheeded by the Christian heart of the world. Let us, therefore, with a devotion thoughtful and earnest, go forth in fellowship with Jesus Christ to minister to all human needs. With lion-like courage and eagle-eyed hope let us battle and conquer in the name of our Lord.

XIX.

A Society Tragedy.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."—Matthew 25: 10-12.

THIS is a story of social life long ago. It is romantic enough. It is a wedding night in a large social circle. The marriage ceremony has been performed. The bride and bridegroom are now about to proceed to their own house. In that old time, before street lamps were known, a night wedding meant a torchlight procession through the streets, and a most picturesque and interesting scene. One company of five girls has accompanied the bride as she has gone forth from her childhood's home, and now as they turn their faces toward the home of the bridegroom, five other girls wait to welcome them. As often happens nowadays, the ceremony is delayed; some of the guests, perhaps coming from another town, are late in arriving, and one thing and another interferes, until the girls, watching with their

lamps to go out to meet the bridegroom and welcome the wedding party to the new home, become tired and fall asleep. It was well-nigh midnight when at last the flaring torches preceded the happy party down the street, and the cry rang out, arousing the sleeping girls, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!" Every girl was on her feet in a moment; sleep vanished like magic, and each one turned to her lamp to see that it was well trimmed and the flame bright for the welcome. Then for the first time five of them discovered that in the multitude of other affairs during the day they had entirely forgotten to see to it that their lamps were well filled with oil. And now they have gone out! What can they do? Each girl turns to her neighbor whose lamp is burning and says, "Let me have some of your oil. Mine has gone out. I forgot to fill it." But the girls with the burning lamps, who have been careful and prudent, now hold up their vessels and show that they only have oil enough for themselves, and that if they should undertake to divide it none of the lamps would burn. And so, leaving the five wise virgins with their lamps trimmed and ablaze, ready to go forth when the procession arrives, the five foolish, careless girls turn and run down the street, hunting for a shop that is still open, that they may get oil. But every shop is closed. At last they pound on the door until they awaken a grumbling man, and they buy a little oil

for their lamps. Then they come back and knock at the bridegroom's door, but it is now closed. When there is no answer, they shout aloud, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the bridegroom feels that they have treated him and his wedding with great discourtesy and disrespect, and that their neglect reveals an absence of regard and care for his feelings; so now he refuses to recognize them as his guests, and replies, "I know you not."

Christ applies this story directly to himself, and urges his disciples to live daily in an alert attitude, always with their lamps trimmed and burning, like unto those who watch for their Lord. No man can tell when this life of probation on earth will come to an end, and it is of infinite importance to us that we leave nothing undone which we feel must be done before we die. We must ever live so that if Christ calls us we shall be ready. Jesus says, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

Here is a solemn question for us: Are you ready to meet Christ in judgment if he calls you to-day? That is a perfectly pertinent and wise question. It is something that is liable to happen to-night, or at any time, and we are never safe to go for an hour, or a moment, without that readiness. We are ready if we have received the forgiveness of our sins through obedience to Christ, and are living in harmony and peace with him. Is this true of you?

A little English girl was asked by a lady what kind of a man a certain relative of hers was, who had befriended her in great need, and was finally asked if he were a Christian. To this the little girl responded with enthusiasm, "Yes, ma'am, he is a converted Christian, that's what he is." That little girl, small as she was, had somehow got it into her head that one might be a mere formal, theoretical Christian without being really converted. But we are not ready to meet Christ in judgment unless we have been converted. Jesus himself has said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." How is it with you? Is your life so intensely Christian that if those who know you were asked whether you were a Christian or not, they would speak out with the enthusiasm and confidence of this little girl, "Yes, he is a converted Christian, that he is."

But some of you have not yet confessed Christ at all. Here is your message. If those who have started on the way, but have not yet become rich in Christian experience, have not come into that fellowship with Jesus Christ which feeds each day's life with heavenly oil as the reservoir of a lamp feeds the burning wick, if it is necessary to appeal to them to make sure of their readiness to meet Christ, how important that I should remind you that you are without God and without hope in the world. How utterly without excuse you would be if Christ should

come and call you, and find that you had made no preparation whatever to meet him in peace.

There is a peculiar message here to the backslider, to you who once had oil in your lamp, so that it burned with a bright flame, so that you rejoiced in daily communion with your Saviour. The Bible was a precious book to you, full of comfort and support. You rejoiced in the prayer-meeting, you delighted in the testimony meeting. Wherever Christ was, and wherever men and women were talking about him in love and sympathy, there you rejoiced to be. But as time went on you were drawn away after the things of the world, and finally were lulled to sleep. The things of Christ lost their interest to you. And now, when I confront you with the cry of the text, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," you awake to the fact that there is no oil left in your lamp. Your Christian experience is a poor burned-out thing. As the oil diminishes, the wick sputters and smokes awhile, and then utterly dies for lack of nourishment. So it was when your Christian life died. You ceased to feed it with prayer and Bible reading and Christian service. You ceased to do anything for the Lord, the oil was used up, and you are now without any clear hope in Jesus Christ. Your name may still be on the church book, but the devotion and love for Christ that were once in your heart have disappeared. What are you going to do about it? How are you going to

greet your Lord? Will you take that poor old empty lamp up to him at last and say, "Let me in. I did light my lamp. I filled it once and it burned brightly, but it burned out and I forgot to fill it. Let me in." Christ has told us what the answer will be. I beg you not to wait for the judgment to see that answer confirmed. Jesus says that the answer will be, "I know you not." Once you were known to the Lord, but you treated him with discourtesy and contempt. You turned your heart away from him, and gave your attention and your admiration to his enemies. O backslider from God, come back to your Lord, and in humble repentance and faith see that your lamp is filled again at the mercy-seat.

This is a wonderfully impressive story, illustrating the awful sin of neglect. It was not a set, malicious purpose on the part of these five girls to show disrespect to the bridegroom by going to the wedding without any oil in their lamps. They all had a sort of general idea that they would be ready and well equipped when the time came. But down in the heart there was indifference as to the wishes of the bridegroom. And so not caring very much about it, not being deeply interested in the matter, it was easy enough to neglect it. I call your attention to the fact that neglect in this case, as indeed in every case, has exactly the same result as a malicious purpose to do evil. To neglect an education means to grow up in ignorance, just as surely as if a man set himself

in malice against books and learning. To neglect to come into the warmth of the house means to leave yourself unsheltered to the cold and the storm. To neglect your friend means to hurt the feelings and wound the heart. So to neglect the "great salvation" which Jesus Christ has purchased for you with his own blood means not only to wound his heart and insult his tenderness and devotion, but it means that your soul will be left without refuge in the day of death and at the judgment seat of Christ.

This story ought to arouse us all to action. Every Christian among us who is seeking day by day to keep the lamp trimmed and burning ought to be aroused to deeper consecration, to more intense earnestness, that we may by our example and influence not only be constantly ready to meet our Lord at his coming, but that our being awake and quick to do our duty may have the effect to arouse others from their slumber. There is a world of meaning in those words of Paul, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." We ought to think of our neighbor's spiritual life. If we see his light burning dimly we should not call attention to it in a critical way, to discourage him, but seek by a bright light in our own window, and by loving sympathy to awaken him to his danger. If your light has once burned, but has now become dark, surely this is God's call to you to fill your lamp again ere it is too late. After the door

is shut is no time to go to buy oil. Why put your soul in jeopardy by living another hour in your cold and backslidden position? Return from your wanderings, repent of your backsliding, pray God for forgiveness of your sins, and pledge him your service anew!

I may be speaking to some one who is greatly discouraged. Life is heavy with sorrow, sin has grown strong and powerful, the way seems dark, and you do not know how, beset as you are, to find Christ and salvation. What is the message to you? I will tell you. Do the simple thing which you can do. Do the thing which anybody can do. Say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Break with your sins by coming to Jesus. He has promised to see you through. Put him to the test.

XX.

The Book of Wishes.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"—Mark 10: 51.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in "Mosses from an Old Manse," tells the story of a strange intelligence office, where a great book was kept in which the clerk recorded all the wishes of idle hearts, the aspirations of deep hearts, the desperate longings of miserable hearts, and the evil prayers of perverted hearts. One interesting thing about this book was that, while there was an endless diversity of mood and circumstance, there was yet a strange similarity in the real groundwork; so that any one page of the volume, whether written in the days before the flood, in the yesterday that has just gone by, or to be written on the morrow that is close at hand or a thousand years hence, might serve as a specimen of the whole. Of course, there were occasionally wild and erratic wishes, like that of the astronomer who recorded a wish to behold the opposite side of the moon, which, unless the system of the firmament be reversed, can never be turned toward the earth. On the same page

of the volume was written the wish of a little child to have the stars for playthings.

The great wishes, however, were the same, and were written down over and over again, with endless diversity of statement and circumstance, but always really the same. I am sure it will be profitable to us to consider some of these wishes which the universal experience of mankind shows to be the supreme longings of the heart, especially since it is suggested by our text and confirmed by the entire teaching of Jesus, that whatever we really desire, if it is good enough to be true, our divine Lord is willing to bestow upon us.

In Hawthorne's strange book the most ordinary wish, which was written down with wearisome recurrence, was for wealth. Sometimes only for small sums, and then again for vast amounts. The desire for wealth—that is, for abundance, riches more than we need for immediate use—is, I think, universal among all healthy human souls. No good man, in his senses, likes to go scrimped and starved, having barely enough to get along on and nothing over to dispense in generous hospitality. God deals bountifully with everything. His manifestation throughout the entire universe is that of a God who has abundance. He pours forth out of the treasure-house of his power, wisdom and beauty, flooding the world with good things. We are God's children, and it is natural for us to desire to have abundance,

and God is willing to give it to us, and of the best sort too. Under the present order of things in the financial world, one of the saddest features is the inequality in the possession of wealth. In a perfect world none would use their riches regardless of the blessing and comfort of their fellows. Sin has brought about all that is uncomfortable and evil in the distribution of material wealth; though, unequal as conditions are to-day, Christianity is steadily making them better. The world is far better to-day as a place for the multitudes to live in than it has ever been since the dawn of history. Some one has written:

"Oh, the earth is full of sinning
And of trouble and of woe,
But the devil makes an inning
Every time you say it's so,
And the way to set him scowling
And to put him back a pace
Is to stop the stupid growling
And to look things in the face.

"There is much that needs amending
In the present time, no doubt;
There is right that needs defending
There a wrong needs crushing out,
And we hear the groans and curses
Of the poor who starve and die
While the men with swollen purses
In the place of hearts go by.

"If you glance at history's pages
In all lands and eras known,

You will find the vanished ages
Far more wicked than our own.
As you scan each word and letter,
You will realize it more
That the world to-day is better
Than it ever was before.

"But in spite of all the trouble
That obscures the sun to-day,
Just remember it was double
In the ages passed away."

But while there is this inequality still among us, the essence of wealth, that for which wealth stands, comfort and respectability, Jesus Christ is able to bestow to-day upon every sincerely seeking soul. Many men have great wealth, but neither comfort nor respectability; while others have very little of this world's goods and yet are rich in character, rich in those high qualities of heart and soul which give them peace and honor. If a man had his choice, it would be infinitely wiser to have the true riches of the spirit than any amount of riches for the body. Earthly riches often take wings and fly away, and their limitations are very sharp and decisive; but the riches of the soul abide and not even death can lay his cold hand upon them. There is no excuse for any of us going without spiritual wealth. The treasure-house of God is inexhaustible, and Christ is holding out to us an open hand.

A good second in that wonder-book was the wish for power. That is one of the great longings of the

human heart. Every healthy man longs to make his mark in the world. Every sane woman desires to be charming and influential among those about her. It is idle and wicked to try to crucify an honest, intelligent desire for power among men. All civilization, all progress in invention, in arts, in science and religion are in a high degree due to this tremendous incentive of the soul. This love of power, this hunger for it, is given us by our Father, God, who is all-powerful. And when we are willing to have the best kind of power we may ask without reserve at the mercy-seat. God is able to bestow upon each one of us a charm and an influence far surpassing anything we have ever known, when we are willing to consecrate ourselves to use every ounce of power given us for the blessing of our fellow men. Browning makes Paracelsus say:

> "Be sure that God
> Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart."

When God can trust us with increased power, he will bestow it upon us. In his early ministry Thomas Chalmers, though an able and eloquent preacher, and highly intellectual, found his sermons to be utterly without power over the people. When he was about twenty-nine years old he was stricken with disease, and for some time his life was despaired of. On his bed of sickness he received a new religious experience. He thoroughly consecrated himself to the

work of the ministry, and became a new man. Previous to that illness people said he was more intellectual than pious, but from the time he arose from his sick bed he seemed to realize that he was the mouthpiece of God. He became the most influential preacher in Scotland. The great men of the nation flocked to hear him. Channing, prime minister of the kingdom, was moved to tears, and Wilberforce wrote: "All the world is wild about Dr. Chalmers." God had been able to trust the new Chalmers who had given himself in all humility and abandon to him. Do you long for real power? Jesus is standing before you saying, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

Another of the universal wishes is the wish for love and fellowship. This, too, belongs to every normal and healthy human soul. It is in many ways the sweetest thing that God has given to us. Human love has power beyond all words to describe, to comfort and bless the heart. Jacob Riis, whom President Roosevelt once pronounced the most useful citizen of New York City, tells in his autobiography his own love-story. He had been in this country a good while, and was very lonely and homesick. He hoped for a letter from the Old World. Every day, when the letter-carrier came up the street, his hopes rose high until he had passed. Years went by and the letter he longed for never came. Finally, one autumn day, he went to his office and found it lying there,

The instant he saw it he knew by the throbbing of his heart what it was. He sat as much as a quarter of an hour staring dumbly at the unopened envelope. Then he arose slowly, put it in his pocket and stumbled homeward, walking as if in a dream. He went up to his room and locked himself in. And there he read that blessed love-letter that became a part of his life, to abide forever with light and joy and thanksgiving. "How much of sunshine," exclaims Riis, "one little letter can contain! Six years seemed all at once the merest breath of time to have waited for it. Toil, hardship, trouble—with that letter in my keep? I laughed out loud at the thought. The sound of my own voice sobered me. I knelt down and prayed long and fervently that I might strive with all my might to deserve the great happiness that had come to me." The stars were long out when his landlord, who had heard his restless walk overhead, knocked to ask if anything was the matter. He saw the light in his face when he opened the door, and he took a sidelong step, shading his eyes to get a better look, and held out his hand.

"Wish you joy, old man," he said, heartily. "Tell us of it, will you?" And he did.

And Riis declares that the proverb, "All the world loves a lover," was realized in the days that followed, when everybody seemed to understand and the whole world smiled back on him all day long. Only the other day he was lecturing in Chicago, when a

woman came up and asked if he was the Riis she had traveled with on a Hamburg steamer twenty-five years before, and who was going home to be married. She had never forgotten how happy he was. She and the rest of the passengers held it to be their duty toward him to warn him that "she" might not turn out as nice as he thought she was. The woman looked him all over and said, "I guess we might have spared ourselves the trouble."

This is a suggestion of what human love can do for a person in making all the sorrows and trials of life seem little and insignificant, compared to its great blessings. And yet, great and divine as it is, such a love, even at its best, is a small thing in its fullness and richness of blessing, when compared with the full revelation of the heart of the divine Saviour to a human soul. When a man or a woman looks upon the Lord Jesus Christ and sees him coming from the glory of heaven to suffer and die upon the cross; beholds him rising from the grave and ascending up on high, interceding in his or her behalf, and says, deep down in the consciousness of the heart, "He did it all for me; for me he bared his back to the smiters; for me he held out his hand to be nailed to the cross; it is to me he offers this undying love; for me he is fitting up heavenly mansions"—the soul that really enters into that love, and knows that fellowship, has found an experience that no sickness or loss or death can ever interfere

with. O brother, sister, Jesus stands before you inquiring, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

Then there is the wish for goodness. That is a wish which only God can grant to the man or the woman who has lost it. The saddest part of the story which Hawthorne tells us is concerning a man who came into that strange intelligence office with a downcast look. It was such an aspect as he might have had had he lost the very soul out of his body and traveled all the world over, searching in the dust of the highways and along the shady foot-paths and beneath the leaves of the forest and among the sands of the seashore, in the hope of recovering it again. With a sad face he came up to the man of intelligence. "I have lost—" he began, and then he paused.

"Yes," said the clerk, "I see that you have lost, but what?"

"I have lost a precious jewel," replied the unfortunate man, "the like of which is not to be found among any prince's treasures. While I possessed it the contemplation of it was my sole and sufficient happiness. No price should have purchased it of me, but it has fallen from my bosom, where I wore it in my careless wanderings about the city."

After causing the stranger to describe the marks of his lost jewel, the intelligencer opened a drawer where were deposited whatever articles had been

picked up in the streets, until the rightful owners should claim them. It was a strange collection: there were wedding rings, and white roses, and blush roses, and locks of hair, and many of these things were fragrant with perfumes. Perhaps a sweet scent had departed from the lives of their former possessors ever since they had so wilfully or negligently lost them. And in the corner of the drawer was found a great pearl, looking like the soul of celestial purity, congealed and polished.

"There is my jewel—my very pearl!" cried the stranger, almost beside himself with rapture. "It is mine! Give it me this moment or I shall perish!"

"I perceive," said the man of intelligence, examining it more closely, "that this is the Pearl of Great Price."

"The very same," answered the stranger. "Judge then of my misery at losing it out of my bosom! Restore it to me! I must not live without it an instant longer!"

"Pardon me," rejoined the intelligencer, calmly. "You ask what is beyond my duty. This pearl, as you well know, is held upon a peculiar tenure, and, having once let it escape from your keeping, you have no greater claim to it than any other person, nay, not so great. I cannot give it back."

Nor could the entreaties of the miserable man, who saw before his eyes the jewel of his life without the power to reclaim it, soften the heart of this stern

being, impassive to human sympathy, though exercising such an apparent influence over human forces. Finally the loser of the Pearl of Great Price clutched his hands in his hair and rushed madly forth with despair in his face.

Hawthorne is true to life in that picture. The lost pearl of goodness cannot be restored again by any earthly power. But, thank God, Jesus Christ is the great restorer of the soul. He is able to make us worthy to wear again the lost pearl of goodness. He has power on earth to forgive sins. He who looked down into the blind, but excited and longing, face of Bartimæus and inquired, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" knowing that he had power to give him his sight, is standing before you, conscious as you are of your sins, conscious as you are of the wicked habits that you have no power to break, conscious as you are of the loss of moral purity. Christ stands before you knowing that he has the power to break your bondage, to cleanse your heart, to lift from your soul the burden of guilt, and cause you to rejoice in a sweet sense of pardon and peace. He is saying to you, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" What will your answer be?

You notice how clearly and strongly Christ puts it. It is not what you wish to do. It is the active, aggressive word, "will," which means a wish in action. As some one says, a wish may be but an empty cloud drifting idly by, casting a shadow that bends

no blade of grass; willing is a cloud heavy with rain, pouring forth its treasures to refresh the earth. A wish may be but a leaf through which the tree breathes; it rustles, whispers, withers, and is forgotten: a will is the fruit summing up the juices of the tree, the ripening apples that are good for food. You may wish without acting; will is the soul of action. Apply it to yourself now. You may say, face to face with this earnest, soul-stirring theme, "I wish I were a Christian," and yet go away and drift farther from God than ever. But, on the other hand, you may act as blind Bartimæus did. When Christ said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" he immediately responded, "Lord, that I might receive my sight,—" and he went away rejoicing. And so, if you will respond like that to Christ's inquiry and say in answer to Christ's question, "Lord, that my sins may be forgiven, that my heart may be cleansed, that my soul may be awakened, that the graces of the Spirit may grow and bloom in my character, that a holy charm may fall upon my life, may be in my every word, making my every footstep a benediction and a blessing"—if that is your prayer, heaven will ring with music over the glory that shall come to your heart!

XXI.

Living a Day at a Time.

"The thing of a day in its day."—I Kings 8: 59 (Rev. Ver., Marg. Ren.)

"LIVING a day at a time" is a still more modern translation into our own everyday speech. This is a part of an address made by Solomon at the close of the longest recorded prayer in the Bible. At the close of a great prayer for the forgiveness of God, and his guidance and care over himself and the nation, Solomon arose from his knees and exhorted the people that they should live reverent and prayerful lives, assuring them that if they did so God would give them the blessing which they needed every day as their necessity should arise. It is in this thought that we find our message to-day. It is a great law of God that everything should be attended to at the proper time. The Lord does all his work that way. He has things building, sometimes for thousands of years, but they are never finished until the time arises for their use. He prepares veins of coal and reservoirs of oil and ledges of quartz against the time when they will be needed; but he never lets his

fruit be picked until it is ripe. He deals with us now as he did with the pilgrims from Egypt on their way to Canaan, when he fed them only a day's rations of manna at a time. His blessings reach us when we need them, if we on our part have fulfilled the proper conditions.

Jesus taught the same lesson to his disciples when he gave them that wonderful little prayer which is rising to the lips of the whole world, and in which he taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We are not to worry about to-morrow; we are to eat and be thankful to-day, and on the strength of that cross the border-line of to-morrow, knowing that we shall be met by the fresh mercies of God that are "new every morning."

God emphasizes this law of punctuality by dividing everything into seasons. In every day there is the morning, the high noon, and the evening. In every year there is the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter. Each part of the day, and each season of the year, has its own necessities and requirements, and God meets them with a punctuality that never fails. And our human lives are like that. We need different blessings at different seasons of life, and different duties press upon us as the seasons of life change. Some poet has painted a very pretty picture of the changing conditions of life's seasons:

" Two children down by the shining strand,
With eyes as blue as the summer sea,
While the sinking sun fills all the land
With the glow of a golden mystery;
Laughing aloud at the sea-mew's cry,
Gazing with joy on its snowy breast,
Till the first star looks from the evening sky,
And the amber bars stretch over the west.

" A soft green dell by the breezy shore,
A sailor lad and a maiden fair,
Hand clasped in hand, while the tale of yore
Is borne again on the listening air.
For love is young, though love be old,
And love alone the heart can fill;
And the dear old tale that has been told
In the days gone by is spoken still.

" A trim-built home on a sheltered bay;
A wife looking out on a glistening sea;
A prayer for the loved one far away,
And prattling imps 'neath the old roof-tree;
A lifted latch and a radiant face
By the open door in the falling night;
A welcome home and a warm embrace
From the love of his youth and children bright.

" An aged man in an old arm-chair;
A golden light from the western sky,
His wife by his side, with her silvered hair,
And the open Book of God close by;
Sweet on the bay the gloaming falls,
And bright is the glow of the evening star;
But dearer to them are the jasper walls
And the golden streets of the land afar.

" An old churchyard on the green hillside,
Two lying still in their peaceful rest;

The fishermen's boats going out with the tide
In the fiery glow of the amber west;
Children's laughter and old men's sighs,
The night that follows the morning clear,
A rainbow bridging our darkened skies,
Are the round of our lives from year to year."

We should learn this great lesson which God teaches us concerning his own conduct, and apply it in our own lives. Promptness and punctuality in the doing of duty or the receiving of blessings, are as important in our lives as in the infinitely higher career of our Heavenly Father. Timeliness is always a question of importance, and many times a very slight opportunity seized at once settles a whole career in the way of usefulness and blessing.

The recent death of Dr. R. S. Storrs, of Brooklyn, brings to mind an interesting and forceful incident in the life of his father, who was also a distinguished minister. The father bore the name that he gave to his son, Richard Salter Storrs. In 1817 the elder Storrs was a member of the graduating class in the theological school at Andover. A classmate of his had an appointment to preach as a candidate for the First Congregational Church in Braintree, Massachusetts. The Thursday previous to that Sabbath, the classmate was splitting wood. Unfortunately, his hat fell from his head, and the ax struck through the hat. Thoroughly provoked, he went upstairs, sought out the room of young Storrs, and showed his hat with a great hole in it.

He said, " Look here! See what I have done—stove a hole in my hat. I shall split my head open next. You must go to Braintree and preach for me next Sunday."

Storrs could not refrain from laughing at the predicament, and offered to loan him his own hat. The classmate answered, " No, I will not go wearing a borrowed hat." Storrs consented to take his place, and drove in the chaise to Braintree, for there were no railroads at that time. He preached there on Sunday, charming the audience by his eloquence, deep thought, and fine metaphors. The church unanimously pressed an invitation upon him to become their pastor, and would not take no for an answer. After careful deliberation, he accepted the call, and held that pastorate for sixty-two years in a career of great and growing usefulness. Full of honors, he died there, and his grave is in the cemetery across the street from the church he served with such happiness and fidelity. Dr. Storrs used to say, " I went through the hole in that hat to my life-work"—a signal illustration of our text that we must attend to " the thing of a day in its day."

An act of fidelity toward God and our duty always gains in effectiveness if it is accomplished at the very time when it becomes duty to us. You may see an interesting illustration of this in the case of the late Rear-Admiral John W. Philip, who was the famous captain of the *Texas* during the Span-

ish-American war. He was not only a brave and skilful commander, and a man of the noblest character, but he was a most earnest and faithful Christian. He it was who, after he had carried the *Texas* through the battle of Santiago, in which he had done heroic work in destroying the fleet of Cervera, when the victory was won, and while the powder smoke and the soiled sweat were still on the faces of his crew, summoned all hands on deck, and with uncovered head and reverent voice, said, "I want to make public acknowledgment that I believe in God the Father Almighty. I want all the officers and men to lift their hats, and from their hearts to offer silent thanks to the Almighty." Not only did that act of faithfulness to God make an impression which could never be erased from the minds and hearts of the men who stood on the deck of the *Texas,* but, telegraphed as it was all over the land, and under the oceans to other lands, it sent an electric thrill of courage and faith to Christians in every part of the globe. If Captain Philip had thrust his impulse of thanksgiving to God aside, even for a single day, he would have lost the greatest opportunity of his life for loyalty to his Lord. But, happily, he had learned the secret of doing "the thing of a day in its day."

Every true Christian must be an opportunist in this, that he will seek to do the right thing at the

right time. What is right at one time may be wrong at another. I have heard of a teacher who asked a schoolboy, who happened to be a physician's son, the question, "What is the meaning of false doctrine?" The reply was, "Please, sir, it's when the doctor gives the wrong stuff to the people who are sick." The boy stumbled on the details, but he got at the root of the matter. It is impossible that all days shall be alike to us. Some days will be full of struggle and seeming defeat, when all we can do is to keep our faces to the foe and fight loyally, hoping for the coming of the better day of victory. It is as much a soldier's duty to expose himself to the danger of bullets and sword-thrusts and death at the proper time, as it is for him to remain quiet in camp at other times. So it is the Christian's duty to stand by the right; and if the fortunes of spiritual warfare call him forth to the firing line, where for the present he must suffer and lose, then the thing for that day is sacrifice for Christ's sake and without a murmur. There is a silly and wicked proverb, "A man must live," which is used to cover up our cowardice when we run away from duty. Some one in a little poem exposes the folly of that sentiment:

> "'A man must live.' We justify
> Low shift and trick to treason high,
> A little vote for a little gold

To a whole Senate bought and sold,
With this self-evident reply,
'A man must live.'

"But is it so? Pray tell us why
Life at such cost you have to buy!
In what religion were you told
'A man must live?'

"There are times when a man must die.
Imagine for a battle-cry
From soldiers with a sword to hold,
From soldiers with a flag unrolled,
This coward's whine, this liar's lie:
'A man must live.'"

Our message has special interest to all who are seeking to be helpful to their fellow men. If we are to bless those who are about us, we shall certainly have to be ready to do it day by day. A smile at the right time is worth more than a year of devoted service at some other time, to bless the career of some people whom we meet. A good, strong hand-shake and an encouraging word coming in the nick of time to a man almost discouraged and ready to give up will often turn a hard pressed, baffled soul toward heaven when it was about to drop into hell.

A cabman in Liverpool once signed the pledge for Rev. Charles Garrett, but soon after broke it. The poor fellow was so conscience-stricken and ashamed that he tried to keep out of the way of Mr. Garrett, and would slip around the block and take

another street when he saw him coming. One day, however, Garrett found the poor, miserable man when he was just about to give up entirely and throw himself without reserve into the whirlpool of dissipation. The good man seized him by the hand and said, "John, when the road is slippery and your horse falls down, what do you do with him?"

"I help him up again," replied John, in amazement.

"Well, I have come to do the same," said Mr. Garrett, tenderly. "The road was slippery, I know, John, and you fell; but here's my hand to help you up again."

The sympathy and kindness thrilled the man to the core of his heart. He caught the friendly hand in a vise-like grip and said, "God bless you, sir; you'll never have cause to regret this; I'll never fall again." And that time he kept his word.

Garrett saved the man because he attended to "the thing of a day in its day."

We ought to find in this text a message that will be very helpful to us in bearing up under the burdens of life. We are only required to live a day at a time. Many of us take too long views of life: we look far off down the misty future, and our imagination conjures up all sorts of hobgoblins and ghosts of trouble and worry that may confront us after awhile. Now all that is wicked; we have nothing to do with that far-off time. We may have gone home

to heaven before it comes; and if it comes, God will be able to take care of us and bring us off more than conquerors over anything we shall be compelled to meet. On the other hand, if we take short views of life, as all the Bible teaching shows to be our duty, we shall be greatly comforted and encouraged. Who is there of us that cannot, by the help of God, get through the duties of to-day and fight our temptations off until to-morrow? Surely there is not one. But if we do that, the courage and strength of our victory to-day will bring us to to-morrow in a better condition for the battle than we are now. And so, day by day, we shall climb the hill of life, each day getting nearer to the top, and each day triumphing in our place.

Christina Rossetti looked at life as a climb up-hill, but by grappling with the difficulties of only one day at a time her vision found rest and peace. Her little dialogue between fellow travelers is very comforting:

"Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

"But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

" Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you standing at that door.

" Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labor you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yes, beds for all who come."

XXII.

The Devil's Bait-Stick.

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."—2 Corinthians 2: 11.

THE devil sets traps for men's souls, and baits them with infernal ingenuity. No man is in so great danger of being taken into one of these snares of the devil as the one who is proud and self-sufficient and imagines there are no such things as man-traps into which he may fall. I used to know a great many of the old trappers in my boyhood on the frontier along the Pacific coast. The cunning of those men was always a great wonder to me. They would go into a neighborhood where the beaver and the mink were abundant, and literally honeycomb every stream and path with traps, yet they would do it so carefully that the beaver would never discover their presence. With still more cunning Satan sets traps for men. The marvel of it is that though the Scripture says, "In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird," men will see the net spread, will see other men caught in it, watch their convulsions as they struggle to get away, hear their cries of hor-

ror and remorse, and later see them carried to their burial the acknowledged victims of sin, yet even while they look on will be themselves caught in the same trap.

One of the most successful baits that the devil uses on his bait-stick to catch the men and women of our time is the habit of taking stimulants. And I know I can hardly speak the words but some will say, " Will he never give us a rest on the subject of temperance?" Ah, how gladly I would give the subject a rest, if men would only quit walking into the devil's trap of strong drink. If I spoke about this subject in proportion to the number of times it is impressed upon me by broken-hearted mothers, by anguish-stricken wives, and ruined men and women, I would speak of it far more frequently than I do. So far as a preacher's observation can go, as the sins of men are forced home on him, for every man broken down by any other sin ten men are caught in the snare of strong drink and forever engulfed.

Neither is this a trap which catches boys and young men and young women only. Multitudes of men middle-aged and past are caught in it. An eminent English minister has spoken of the " dangerous years " of a man's life as not those between sixteen and twenty-five, as is commonly supposed, but as those between forty-five and sixty. The idea is so contrary to the common opinion as to be quite

startling. We have been so long accustomed to think of the early period of human life as one of peril, that the thought of peculiar danger in middle-life, or in old age, strikes us as an exaggeration. But there is much of truth in it. Most sins come from thoughts that have long nestled in the imagination. The devil traps more men through the imagination than in any other way. Men who have reached middle-life without falling into outbreaking sin, though they have often had the disposition to do it, frequently get reckless and off their guard as middle age passes, and are drawn into the devil's traps which could not ensnare them in their youth. I knew a man who never touched strong drink until after he was fifty years of age. And yet, in less than ten years from the time he took his first social glass at a public dinner, he had ruined a large business, broken his wife's heart, shamed his sons, and died in an insane asylum, to which he had been taken after a spell of delirium tremens. No man or woman is safe who touches strong drink. And if any of you are being drawn into its toils, I wish I could show you the depths to which it will naturally and easily lead you.

I know the personal story of a man in the middle West, who inherited large wealth and always lived a moral life until he was thirty-five years of age. He was then drawn into politics, and the peculiar temptations surrounding him led him to become

addicted to the habit of strong drink. The habit grew on him, and he continued to drink for fifteen years. In those years he wasted a fortune of three hundred thousand dollars. Af fifty years of age he came home one night drunk, fell down an embankment near the house, and skinned his face until it was much disfigured. He spent the night in drunken sleep, and the next morning was haggard, but sober. When he looked into the mirror, as he was dressing, he started back in amazement at his face.

"What did that to my face?" he inquired of his wife.

"Oh," was her reply, "you came home drunk, as usual, last night, and fell down the embankment, and tore the skin off it."

The man looked at his face for a while in awful disgust. Never before had he seen his drunkenness in this light. Then he turned to his wife, and said, as he lifted his hand to heaven, "If that's what a man does when he gets drunk, God helping me, I'll never touch liquor again!"

From that day his decision was absolute, and he lived a noble and pure life. He lived thirty-seven years longer, an honorable, sober-minded, God-fearing citizen, and died honored by all. What a striking illustration of that wonderful figure of Saint James, when he compares the Word of God to a mirror! If you would see the deadly character of the

sin of taking strong drink, or of any other sin, you must come and look in the mirror of God's Word. If you will look into that perfect law of liberty, you may find with the divine help power to free yourself of your sin and to escape from the snare of the devil.

The bait-stick of Satan's snare is often adorned with brilliant and charming, but dangerous, associations. Many a young man never thought of taking strong drink, or of touching cards to gamble, or of betting on the races, until at the club or at some political society he was brought into touch with people who did these things, and with whom he thought it was for his interest to stand well. Nothing is more important to any one than the choice of associations. The old proverbs, "A man is known by the company he keeps," and, "Birds of a feather flock together," are suggestive of the great truth that no man or woman will long stand out against the influence of the people with whom he or she continually associates. And so it is that many young people go into social gatherings or clubs for perfectly innocent purposes, and find after a while that they were to them the devil's traps because of the personal associations which undermined their moral principles. Beware of evil associations!

I want to speak of another bait used by the enemy of souls, that keeps a great many men and women out of heaven. For lack of a better phrase, I will

call it negative morality. Many people, having been reared under religious influences, have never been able to throw off altogether those early convictions, and they hold a peculiar attitude toward the Christian church. They attend its services; they sing its hymns; they listen more or less reverently to its prayers; they are entertained by its sermons, and yet they never rise to a personal, positive decision for Christ, which would mean their personal salvation. The devil's bait for them is to lull them into a sense of security—a feeling that they are so closely associated with the church that it is nearly as good as if they were Christians.

A fisherman tells this story: He had gone with a friend for a day's fishing. The river was very low and clear, and the only chance was in crouching behind rocks and hiding themselves. Suddenly, as he bent down, absorbed in his work, not a sound about him but the tinkle of a waterfall and the brawl of the shallows, there came a faint bleat at his side. He looked over the rock, and there was a sheep standing deep in the water. He called to his friend, and together they lifted the poor beast out of the stream, up over the deep bushy bank. To their unutterable disgust, it instantly turned and flopped into the water again. They lifted it out once more, and this time took care to take it away far enough to be safe. At once it began to walk, but only went round and round.

"What is the matter with it?" asked the fisherman.

"Oh," said his country friend, "it's got the rounders, something the matter with the brain; they think they are going on, but they are always going around."

Now a great many people who attend church are like that. The only difference is, there is something the matter with their hearts instead of their heads. But the action is just the same; they think they are going on, but they are always going round. If any who read this are in this condition, I pray God that the Holy Spirit may rouse you to realize your state.

A great artist was once employed to paint the picture of a very beautiful child. It belonged to a family of wealth. The father of the child was an infidel, the mother a Christian. After much study and research, it was decided that the picture should show the child asleep in prayer. The artist, of course, must catch the scene from an actual service in which the child should fall asleep during an earnest, faithful prayer. Evening after evening he visited the mother and child in their family worship, the father also being present. At length the opportunity came, and when the mother's sweet petition to God was closed, the child was fast asleep, kneeling by her mother's side. In this position they remained for some time, until released by the artist.

The next evening the artist visited the family again, but this time his countenance wore a troubled look. Said he, "I cannot make the picture complete unless the immediate surroundings are shown, and especially the mother must be painted."

"The picture shall be complete," said the father; "you would as well also put the mother in the scene."

Time wore on, and the painting was being developed. But meantime a strange feeling of loneliness crept into the heart of the father. Something, too, of the attitude of worship, and the power of those sweet petitions from his wife's lips, had been used by the Holy Spirit to illuminate his conscience, and it seemed to him that it would break his heart to be shut out from that little group. Feeling thus, he visited the studio of the artist, and expressed the desire that he might also be painted in the picture in the attitude of prayer, kneeling with his wife and child.

"No," said the artist, "it is too late. You would either add to or take from, and that must not be."

"Add to or take from," the man repeated to himself that evening, as he heard his wife's prayer.

"Asleep in Prayer" hung long on the walls of the rich man's palace. But again the artist was called, this time to a Christian home. That evening the father prayed, and even to this day there hang upon the walls of the ancient palace two paintings—

"Asleep in Prayer," the mother and the child, and "Awake in Christ," a group of father and mother and a young lady, while under the picture is this inscription: "You will either add to or take from."

I am sure that some who read this ought to receive it as God's personal message. You have had Christian training and Christian friends, and yet Satan has ensnared you into the net of inaction, so that there is great danger that, despite all your opportunities and privileges to become a Christian, you will finally fail. Put your salvation beyond question this very hour by making an honest and public confession of Jesus Christ.

XXIII.

Fate Knocking at the Door.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—Revelation 3: 20.

Christ is the arbiter of spiritual destiny. To know him, to have him for a guest in the heart, to sup with him at the table in daily fellowship, is to know the living presence of goodness and truth. Where Christ dwells evil skulks away, envy and jealousy vanish, and impurity cannot abide. Hence it is no fanciful word to say that when Christ comes knocking at the door of a man's heart, it is fate that is knocking for admittance. And no one ever reaches this highest destiny until he comes to know this sweet and familiar fellowship with Jesus Christ which is outlined in our text.

A modern writer of fiction tells an interesting story of natural history concerning the northern reindeer. It seems that on those far-off plains, at a certain season, a hundred miles from the sea, in the midst of the Laplander's village, a young reindeer will raise his broad muzzle to the north wind,

and stare at the limitless distance for the space of a minute or more. He grows restless from that moment, but he is yet alone. The next day a dozen of the herd look up from the cropping of the moss, snuffing the breeze. Then the Laps nod to one another, and the camp grows daily more unquiet. At times the whole herd of young deer stand and gaze, as it were, breathing hard through wide nostrils, then jostling each other and stamping the soft ground. They grow unruly, and it is hard to harness them into the light sleds. As the days pass, the Laps watch them more and more closely, well knowing what will happen sooner or later. And then, at last, in the northern twilight, the great herd begins to move. The impulse is simultaneous, irresistible; their heads are all turned in one direction. They move slowly at first, biting still, here and there, at the bunches of rich moss. Presently the slow step becomes a trot, they crowd more closely together, while the Laps hasten to gather up their last unpacked possessions, their cooking utensils and their wooden gods. The great herd breaks together from a trot to a gallop, from a gallop to a breakneck pace, the distant thunder of their united tread reaches the camp for a few minutes, and then they are gone out of sight and hearing to drink of the Polar Sea. The Laps follow after them, dragging painfully their laden sledges in the broad track left by the thousands of galloping beasts, a day's jour-

ney, and they are yet far from the sea, and the path is yet broad.

On the second day the path grows narrower, and there are stains of blood to be seen; far on the distant plain before them their sharp eyes distinguish in the direct line a dark, motionless object, another, and yet another. The race has grown more desperate and more wild as the stampede nears the sea. The weaker reindeer have been thrown down and trampled to death by their stronger fellows. A thousand sharp hoofs have crushed and cut through hide and flesh and bone. Ever swifter and more terrible in their motion, the ruthless herd has raced onward, careless of the slain, careless of food, careless of any drink but the sharp, salt water ahead of them. And when at last the Laplanders reach the shore, their deer are once more quietly grazing, once more tame and docile, once more ready to drag the sled wherever they are guided. Once in its life the reindeer must taste of the sea in one long, satisfying draught, and if he is hindered, he perishes. Neither man nor beast dare stand between him and the ocean in the hundred miles of his arrow-like path.

We have in that fierce thirst of the reindeer for the Polar Sea, a figure of the yearning of the human heart for the water of life; for that high and satisfying portion which we may only find in Christ, our Saviour, who in so many ways comes knocking at the door of our hearts. Sometimes this yearning

is greater than at other times. Sometimes the land breezes of the world take away from our nostrils all breath of the salt sea of immortal hope. But again and again it will come to us, and without it we shall never have real peace. Nothing that this world has to bestow can ever give perfect rest or satisfaction to the immortal spirit that is in man.

A gentleman relates how several business men, who were accustomed to handle large interests, met recently and were discussing their affairs. Finally one of them said, "Well, for my part, I do not get satisfaction. This doing of business is all well enough, and it has its pleasures as well as its successes; but, after all, it does not seem to me to contain a rational end of life." "Exactly," said another. "What we want is an adequate life purpose. It has always seemed to me that religion ought to furnish such a purpose; but, so far, it has done little to help me." A third said, "I want a church where I can go and be inspired—washed out of the every-day, common things, and get a glimpse of that which is lasting. Yes, sir, we are making a big failure in this matter of business success." A fourth added, "It doesn't satisfy. When a man has a million, he wants ten millions, and then a hundred millions; and when these fellows cannot amass any more, I am afraid a great wave of suicide will set in, out of a total disgust of life on that line." "There certainly is a sort of life that does not end in mere

business routine," said the first speaker. "I get glimpses of it enough to know that there is a reality, a substantiality, somewhere. What I want to know is myself, and my relation to the Everlasting. Is there a road that widens out forever into better thought, better hope, better will?" Then these men, who had been speaking to one another out of their hearts, agreed to get together once a week and talk the matter over. Now it is easy to see that these business men, like the reindeer of the north, had caught a breath from the immortal sea, and that there was in them the deep thirst for the living waters. Christ was knocking at the door of their hearts. To open the door and let him in would give peace to all such souls. No church can do you any good unless you make the church a genuine place of fellowship with other men and women who have the same fellowship with Christ as that to which you give yourself.

This figure which Christ uses gives a very clear and unmistakable suggestion as to what any man who has not yet admitted Christ to the open fellowship of his heart and life ought to do. To become a Christian is no vague and unreal thing. When a visitor stands outside of your door and knocks, your privilege is plain. It is for you to go and open the door and give him welcome, if you wish him to come in. Now Jesus declares that that is his attitude toward your soul. You say, "I wish I were a real

and sincere Christian." Very well, it is all in your own hands. He is knocking at your door. Rise up and open the door, and bid him enter. You say, "I have always admired Jesus, and there are times when it would take a tenderer word to express my feelings toward my divine Lord and Saviour." Then why don't you tell him so? Why don't you tell other people so? We are like the old Puritans, oft-entimes, about the expression of our love toward Jesus. They were afraid to tell their wives and children that they loved them, and many a heart bled in deep silence. I suppose there was many another young maiden like Priscilla who felt like saying to her John Alden, "Speak for yourself, John!" as the silent fellow sat dumb by her side. Many people are like that in spiritual matters. They do not give utterance to God, or to their neighbors, concerning the feelings of their hearts. I have seen men and women who seemed to be waiting, getting no joy, no peace, no comfort out of their thoughts of God and heaven, until suddenly they were constrained to utter what was really in their hearts, and Christ came to their table and they were glad.

Do you remember that beautiful scene in the morning-time by the little Sea of Galilee, when after the night's fishing Christ called his friends to come to the shore and have breakfast with him? And after the breakfast Christ asked Peter if he loved him. The hungry heart of Jesus longed for the re-

sponse, as a lover asks his beloved over and over again for assurances of love; as a mother asks the little child for love's sweet answer. And Peter vowed that he did. And Christ asked again and again, until at last Peter blurted out, "I do love thee, and thou who knowest all things knowest that I love thee." Peter never denied his Lord after that. It is this open recital of love that will establish you in the service of the Lord.

Another lesson is suggested to us by this persistent knocking of Jesus at the door of our hearts. It is the lesson of the patient persistence of God's love. A father who was wise in the care of his children once overheard an older child say to the youngest in a threatening tone, "You must be good, or father won't love you." Then the father called him to himself, and said, gravely and tenderly, "Do you know what you have said? It is not true, my boy, not a bit true; you never made a bigger mistake, my son. I don't love you because you are good. There are lots of good lads. But I love you just because you are my own little son. If you grow up to become the worst man, I shall love you with a love that will break my heart, but I shall love you still. I don't love you only when you are good. I love you because I cannot help loving you. When you are good I love you with a love that makes me glad, and when you are not good I love you with a love that makes me sad." "Is that it?" said the boy.

"Then I will be good, father." God's great love for us is like that. We may sin against him, but he does not cease loving us. We may turn from him eternally, but he still loves us with a love more tender than a mother knows for her child. Oh, the hardness that makes us fight against God's love!

One of the daughters of Nathaniel Hawthorne was fond of inventing and repeating stories. One day she told her brother of a very naughty child who gradually became naughtier and naughtier, until at last, as the culmination of her wickedness, she struck God! Alas! how often God is struck! The cruel soldiers of Rome struck Jesus with their whips until the blood ran down over his shoulders, and the mob struck him in the face. But that was a little thing compared to the strokes you give him when, with all your knowledge of his sacrifice and love, you keep him outside through the years, knocking at the door of your heart, and will not let him in.

But perhaps some timid, sensitive soul is feeling to-night like this: "I would let Jesus into my heart, but I have nothing with which to feed him; my life seems so narrow and so little, my thoughts are so unimportant, that if Christ were to come to sup at my table, I would be ashamed, there would be so little there that would please him." O my friend, if that is the way you are feeling, you have much yet to learn of the goodness and the love of Jesus.

Mr. Thomas Champness tells of an old lady in

England who lived in a lodge on a fine estate. She had been in the service of an old countess, but she was past work. She was a great favorite with the countess and her family, and they came sometimes to have tea with her. One day she got a letter saying, "We are all coming to tea." She was at her wits' end. "Oh, dear!" said she, and she went into the pantry, where she found a crust of bread, one bit of bacon, a spoonful of tea, and one lump of sugar. "What shall I do?" she asked. She came back and picked up the letter again, and saw at the bottom, in brackets, the word "over." She got to the window, turned over the letter and saw this: "P. S.—We shall send on a man with a basket of provisions when we come." "Oh," said she, "you are welcome now." That is exactly the state you are in when you say, "I would like to be a Christian, but I'm afraid I could not hold out. I'm afraid it would not last long, and Christ would soon be disappointed in me." My brother, my sister, Christ brings all the provisions along when he comes to sup with you. What there is for you to do is to open the door of your heart, confess him publicly as your guest, let him in; he will bring the needed faith and repentance and pardon; it will all come with Jesus. Rise up, and open the door to-night!

XXIV.

The Man who Runs.

"The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling."—John 10: 13.

This is one of those heart-searching declarations of Jesus that goes straight home to the roots of the matter. It is a striking picture. A sheep owner has hired a man to herd his flock of sheep, and so long as there is no danger, and no need for him to exert himself or risk anything by fidelity, he gets along all right; but there comes a day when a big mountain wolf comes down out of the higher hills toward his flock. Then the test comes. If the owner of the sheep had been there, he would have fought the wolf off, even at personal risk; or, if the herder had been an honest, faithful man, one who did his work in a noble spirit, who cared more for the consciousness of having done his work well than for the wages he received, he too would have given fight to the wolf. But he is not a man of that stripe. He is not herding sheep because he likes it, nor because he cares anything for his master or for the safety of the flock; but solely because he wants the

wages. And so, when he sees the wolf coming, he runs as fast as he can and gets out of the way. Of course, the sheep will be scattered, and some of them will be mangled, and torn, and devoured; but what is that to him, since his own precious carcass will be left whole?

We may apply this story everywhere. In the essence, it means this: that a man will run from his duty if he is that kind of a man—if he is not doing his work, whether it be what men call common labor or what they term noble and sacred employment, with a high devotion to his master or with any noble ideal for his own conduct—he will run when he sees the wolf of trial or persecution or trouble coming. He will run because he is a hireling. He will run because he is doing his work selfishly.

We may see in our message the tremendous importance which Jesus attaches to the conversion of the soul. He declares that a man must be born again out of the old nature of the hireling. The man who does not do his work for love's sake, who has no keen sense of devotion to God, must be born out of this nature into the new nature. Then he will feel about God and man and work in the same way that Jesus did. You could not run Christ away from his duty, because he cared more for pleasing God and saving lost men and women than he did for any personal comfort. He saw the wolf com-

ing, but did not run. He knew that the cruel fangs of the wolf would fasten on him and end in his death on the cross; but he went straight toward the wolf with a smile on his face. You and I will have the courage and heroism to do the same thing when we have his nature and spirit.

It is idle for us to undertake to live the Christian life in a worldly spirit. Rev. E. Payson Hammond has a little parable about a young wolf, which said to his mother, "How I wish, mother, I could be a dog. Then I would not go hungry as we sometimes do now; for I have heard that dogs get food every day. How can I learn to be a dog?"

The mother wolf replied, "I will tell you. Go to-night to a farmer's house where there are children, and do not bark sharply; let the children play with you. You will soon forget that you are a wolf."

When night came, the little wolf crept near to the farmer's door. The farmer picked him up, saying, "Here is a little wolf I found on the door-step."

The children all ran to see him, and treated him as if he was a puppy dog that had come to stay with them. The farmer told his neighbors that he had found a young wolf. The children said, "It is a beautiful little puppy dog."

One day the farmer brought a weak lamb into the house. The children fed it, and it was soon ready to run about and play with them. All the time the farmer kept his eye on the young wolf, which was

now getting pretty large, and the children said, "Father, Lupus is almost big enough to take care of the sheep!" "Yes," the father said, "but he might eat up some of the lambs instead of taking care of them." He put the lamb back into the fold.

That night the young wolf did not sleep well. He thought of the weakly lamb in the fold, and he found his way to where the sheep and lambs were gathered; then he sprang over the fence and caught the lamb. He killed the poor thing and ate it. He dared not go back to his master and to the sweet-faced girl who fondled him when he was so small. Off in the distance he heard the barking of the wolves, and away he ran to join them. After all, he had a wolf's nature instead of a dog's, and found himself more at home with wolves than with children.

We have in this simple story an illustration of what Christ meant when he spoke about men who have an outward appearance that is as docile as a lamb, but who are at heart ravening wolves. After all, it is the heart that counts. In the great tests of life we may be very sure that if the selfish hireling spirit is in us we will desert our colors under fire.

The inner nature will come to the surface under provocation. I have heard of a lady who thought pigs were very nice if they were kept clean. One was given to her. She made a little dress for it, and taught it some nice tricks. It used to follow her

about, and the boys and girls were glad to see the little animal. One day, as she was going past a deep mud hole, the pig broke away from her and went down into the deep mire. The clean clothes were nearly spoiled. She fished the pig out and had him washed and dressed again; but his nature was the same, and at length she got tired of taking care of him in that way. She said, "He is a pig, and never will be anything but a pig."

This story is often illustrated in human life. If we are to get rid of the selfishness that makes impossible the doing of noble and splendid things for God and humanity, we must have the renewed nature. Paul understood this when he said that any man who was in Christ became a new creature in Christ Jesus. That pig, with clean clothes on, was, after all, nothing but a pig, and his nature led him to the mud-hole; the young wolf, though treated like a pet dog and trying to look like one, still had a wolf's heart; and while for a time it acted like a dog, in the end the wolfish heart had its way. O my friends, what are we at the heart? That is the great question of life. And it is worth asking, for God is able and willing to take the most discouraging case, and renew our hearts, and give us a new spirit. He tells us in Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." When a

man has the new spirit which causes him to look at life from the same standpoint as Jesus Christ, he will be honest and noble and heroic, just as surely in secret or in small matters as he would in the greatest deed with the gaze of the whole world upon him.

The story is told of a butler, serving in the establishment of a great earl in Scotland. The butler had under his charge a splendid pantry, where all things belonging to such a department in a great house were stored away when not in use, and where, arranged on the shelves, was kept the silverware.

As the earl was a very observing man, he noticed at one time that a wonderful change had taken place in the manners and conduct of his butler, which he had not been able to account for.

On a particular occasion, a distinguished nobleman, with a few other guests, was dining with the earl. Just before finishing the dinner, the nobleman, noticing the extraordinary cleanliness and brilliancy of the silver, said to the earl, "Where did you ever get such silver?"

The earl answered, "It is my butler who has given it such unusual polish. He is a strange man. Come into the pantry with me and look at my reserve silver."

They stepped together into the pantry, and the butler was there. After the nobleman had admired the arrangement, the nicety, and the brightness of

the silver vessels, he turned to the butler and asked of him, "Why did you take such pains with them?"

"Well, sir," said George, "I will tell you. I became a Christian and joined the church, and I was thinking and thinking how I could best please the great Master. It occurred to me that I might do it by trying every day to do my work better than I had ever done it before; and that is what makes the silver so bright and clean."

There is a very interesting sequel to this story. The nobleman who was visiting the earl was a friend of Mr. Spurgeon, and when he went to London, he told him of the incident, thinking it a remarkable result to be produced by becoming a professed follower of Christ. Spurgeon was so greatly interested in the story that he sent a trusted friend all the way to Scotland to see if he could not persuade this butler to come to him in London and be his helper in Christian work. The butler came, and years afterward Spurgeon bore testimony that this man brought more people to Christ, and into his tabernacle, than any other of his workers. Spurgeon used to call him his "hunter," because he exhibited the fidelity, the persistency, and the thoroughness which appear in the successful chase.

Let us not fail to get the message God would teach us by our theme. All of us are shepherds in our way. God has given us duties to perform, and ever and anon we shall be tempted to be

traitors to the work he has entrusted to us. The wolf will come. We shall hear his howl on many a dark day. We shall see the gleam of his white and cruel teeth. What we shall do in such a case will depend upon the spirit that controls and masters us. If we are only hirelings, and are living without any high and lofty confidence, without being animated by any reverent devotion to God and loving trust in Christ, we shall run in that trying time. No man can afford to risk standing in his own strength. Peter tried it, and failed shamefully; but when he repented and was forgiven by the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the new spirit went forth to his noble work, he was as brave as a lion. No wolf ever saw his heels again. You and I can conquer in the same spirit.

Down in Texas a middle-aged man was convicted of stealing and sent to the penitentiary for a long term. After he had received his sentence the sheriff announced that he would take him to the State prison on the following morning. At the appointed time the sheriff, with a string of convicts handcuffed together, was at the station waiting for the train. While the crowd sat in the depot a little old woman in black, with a face in which the fingers of sorrow had pinched great furrows, appeared at the door. She looked at the string of prisoners intently, then a light of recognition came over her face. She stepped up to the group of unfortunates, and laid her

hand on the arm of a big, coarse fellow with a heavy red moustache.

The man turned and looked at the little woman. "Mother!" he exclaimed. That was all. Big tears came into his eyes. They did not stay there, but crowded one another out to chase down the rough face, red now with shame. They ran into the big moustache, and off the end of it. Then he recovered himself. The little woman was not crying—people sometimes get beyond that.

"What—are—you—doing—here?" the big man sobbed.

"I came, my son," said the little woman with furrows in her face, "to see you off."

"To see me off?" The man was dazed.

"Yes, Henry. When you were such a little boy that you had never been out of the home yard alone, I went to the gate with you the first day you ever went to the store by yourself. I watched you the three blocks of the distance, until your chubby feet carried you into the little country store your father kept. Then, when you were six, and started for school, I went to the gate with you again, and told you how to act in the school-room. You went away on a visit when you were ten, and I went to the depot with you and your uncle, then, and kissed you good-bye before the cars started."

Now the tears were flowing from the big man's eyes.

"Yes," and the little woman sighed a bit. "Then you got to be sixteen, and wanted to go to St. Louis. It was hard to part with you, but we did it—your father and I—and I went to the little depot with you and kissed you. You remember, don't you?"

The other prisoners were interested now, and the sheriff took in every word.

"Then you were married, Henry. I went to see you bound by law and God to that sweet, dear Mary, who is now—"

"Don't—don't!" almost shrieked the big man.

"Yes," the little woman went on, unheeding, "and now, you are going away again, and I must kiss you. The train is coming, Henry; kiss your old mother."

The sheriff had not moved. Ordinarily he would have told the man to move on. But he waited now. The big man bowed, and tried to hide his manacled hands.

"Kiss me, Henry," the old lady repeated. The head moved lower, and the big red moustache almost covered the little face with the furrows on it.

Then the gang started to the train. As the cars began to move, the little woman stood on the platform. She caught a glimpse of her big son through the car window. She waved a little black-bordered handkerchief at him. "Good-bye, Henry," she called out feebly, and then, through force of habit

formed when she sent her little son to school, she murmured, "Be—be a good boy."

One of that gang of prisoners said afterward that the little scene in the depot was a greater punishment to each man there than his respective term of imprisonment. What infinite meaning is wrapped up in that wonderful declaration of Scripture which says that God will comfort us "as one whom his mother comforteth."

XXV.

The Life is the Light.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."—John 1 : 4.

Life baffles us in our most profound science. We do not know what it is, or how to describe it; but there is about it a deep charm. A fine diamond is very beautiful, but the healthy imagination, which can behold the green field or the yellow waving of the harvest stalks, finds still more charm in a grain of wheat, for it has life.

The most wonderful thing said about Jesus Christ is that in him was life. That was the glory of his personality: He was, and is, the fountain of life. He inspired people who came in touch with him. It was like coming in contact with an electric battery. It refreshed them. It exalted them. It inspired them. It gave them a new insight into life, and into themselves. The woman who talked with Jesus at the well of Samaria went back to her friends in the little town, and said, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." Of course that was an exaggeration, and perhaps if she had been called

upon to narrate the special things Jesus had said to her she would have found it hard work to remember them. But she had come in touch with the living battery of life. It had thrilled her through and through. It resurrected all her sins, and made them seem loathsome and horrible. It revived her fainting soul to believe that goodness was possible to her. It lifted her out of the charnel-house of spiritual death into which she had been degraded, and set her on a plane high enough for the breezes of heaven and immortal hope to fan her brow.

Paul saw Jesus but for a moment on the dusty highway at noon, but it was like meeting a lightning flash as it pierces its forked way athwart the face of a thunder-cloud. It stirred Paul to the center of his being. It shocked him out of his self-conceit. It electrified him with a vision of the new life of fellowship with Christ which was possible. And his proudest testimony, after many years, when standing before King Agrippa, was, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

Christ stood at the grave of Lazarus with such divine vitality that when he said, "Come forth!" the dead man arose in his grave-clothes, and came forth. But even that is not so great an exhibition of life as has been witnessed a thousand times in the story of Christ's work in the world. It is spiritual vitality which the world needs most. The eloquent W. H. H. Murray graphically pictures what we have all

seen again and again—a man out of whom had gone all heavenly resemblance, and in whom all rudeness, coarseness, profanity, and worldly lusts were incarnate. There was no pressure that inclined him downward to which he did not yield. Had his soul been of stone it could not have been less responsive to the divine solicitations. There was not a function in him which was not petrified on its heavenward side. There was not a capacity in him that did not, so far as righteous action goes, lie dead. Well, one night, while he was lying on his bed, Jesus Christ, in the shadow of the darkness—not violently, but still as the stillness around and above his bed, more dreadful, perhaps, because of the stillness, perhaps more gentle because of it—drew near to this dead soul, breathed on it once, gently took his hand, and said, "Soul, arise!" And that dead soul felt strange currents run through all its veins, until the frozen current melted, ran, became warm, began to throb, and life came into it—life to stand, to move; and the dead soul arose and stood before the Lord, then full of rapture bowed down and worshipped. Afterward that man lived a life that took knowledge of all God's mercies, a life like that of the bird that has no beak to pierce and no talons to wound, that never claws or strikes and can only sing; a life like that of the little stream that has no deep, dark places in it, into which children can fall unaware and be drowned, but which runs clear and cool, shallow and

safe, content to minister to the roots of flowers that fringe it, and to be drunk up by thirsty cattle and weary men. What changed this man's life? What transformed, illuminated, electrified, revitalized him? He had found Christ. He had found the fountain of life. He had found him in whom is life, and whose life is the light of men. It was the new Christ-life in him that made the difference.

John Newton was a reckless slave-hunting sinner when he met Jesus Christ. Almost as suddenly as the change came in Paul, he ceased to swear and scoff and hunt slaves, and began to pray. Twenty years later he was in London, praying and preaching and overflowing in good works. On Sundays he preached to rich bankers and titled ladies. On week-day evenings he would sit on a three-legged stool in his blue sailor jacket, and open up his rich experiences and wise counsels to the poorest and most wicked who came to visit him. "I was a wild beast on the coast of Africa once," he used to say; "but the Lord Jesus caught me and tamed me, and now people come to see me as they would go to look at the lions in the Tower." What they went to see in John Newton was the Christ who had conquered him and lived in him.

Now the great message I wish to impress on our hearts is that there is only one real light that counts for the world's illumination, and that is the light which shines from the inner spiritual life. The

world burns many superficial candles, but they are only poor shams. Christ is the light of the world because in him is life. And if you and I are to be—as he said we were to be, in our own places—the light of the world, we, too, must have that same divine life in us. If we have that life in us, we shall not even seek to make our light shine; we shall not need to worry about it; we shall just go on living our natural selves, and, to use Christ's words, "Let it shine."

A gentleman was recently traveling in Switzerland. He had stopped at a great hotel, where many titled and wealthy people were at that time guests. While he was looking over the company at breakfast he noticed two German women. They were bent with age, and dressed in quaint, old-fashioned, black garments. Their gray hair was neatly brushed down to form a sort of curtain on each side of their faces, and they wore black silk gloves the fingers of which were a little too long. But their faces! They were as much alike as two crab-apples growing on the same twig, and their color was also that of small, wrinkled, red-cheeked apples. Only a dew-besprinkled apple has ever sparkled so brightly as did the eyes of these little old women. Their heads were close together, bent over an old-fashioned purse made of colored silk and beads, which held coppers at one end and more valuable coin at the other. They were discussing what fee they could afford to give the

waiter, and the traveler could not help overhearing the remark, "Oh, but let us give him a franc. The coffee was so hot and the rolls so crisp and the butter so fresh. And as we are having such a good time, we might as well make somebody else happy. We can spend a little less on our own dinner." A little glove came off; a trembling little hand, with the knuckles swollen as if from rheumatism, dipped into the beaded purse, and the franc was laid on the table, somewhat apart from the money with which the breakfast was to be paid for. And as the youthful waiter came to gather in his own, two wrinkled, rosy faces laughed up at him, and his *pourboire* was handed him with a delight that was pleasant to see. Our friend listened to them as one said, "It is four hours till the train goes." They were evidently to take a slow train, which had a fourth class car, by which you travel cheap, and in which there are no seats. So they sat, their happy eyes taking in all that was going on, and their old hands nervously moving. "Just look at the French lady," whispered one. "Look at her pearls; look at her footman. And that must be an English lady, reading. How pale she looks! Yes, that comes of living in a country where there is always a fog. But, oh, how interesting, how beautiful it all is! Much more so than one might expect from anything we have read about it." They snuggled together and whispered awhile, and then got up and toddled out, one carrying a leather

bag on her arm, the other holding a brown paper parcel.

Two hours later our friend stood at a fine point of vantage to get a glimpse of the snow-crowned chain of Alps which frames the lovely picture of the plain of Basle; and up into the silence came two thin voices, quivering with age, and the two little women, still dressed in rusty black, toiled upwards to where he stood. "Yes, here we are," said one, hot, pink, and panting; "and O Matilda, O look! those are the Alps!" No painter could portray them as they stood there in the morning light, gazing with enraptured faces upon the white hills far away. They folded their small hands instinctively over their old shawls, worn in a point after the manner of many years ago, and for a long time they never spoke a word, but looked and looked. At last one turned to our traveler and asked, timidly, if he spoke German; and if so, would he tell them something about the mountains. He began to talk with them, pointing out the great peaks, and had his reward as one of them took her thick handkerchief out and wiped the tears from her eyes, and told him they had saved for many years in order to come once, for a week, to Switzerland, and see the Alps before they died. And suddenly, as they stood there, a shaky little voice began to sing an old German hymn, a paraphrase of the Psalm, which begins, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my

help." Our friend declares that he has heard many splendid hymns sung in the region of the Alps, but never one like this, that expressed in its thin, uncertain wavers the humble gratitude of a poor old woman at the fulfillment of the dream of a lifetime.

And then they were so grateful for his kindness that he must lunch with them. Their little sandwiches of grayish bread and their bottle of sugared water formed the lunch. But the sauce was more delicious than any French *chef* could have produced. The little old women were as happy as children. Again and again they exclaimed, "Oh, how good God is to let us see all this!" And before they began, and after they finished, they folded their hands a moment in silent prayer. "If we were millionaires," one of them said, "we could not be better off."

Our friend went to see them off in the fourth-class carriage that afternoon. He bought at the flower-stand a little bunch of gentians, and pinned them on their rusty shawls. The dear old souls were full of wonder and delight. They said, "It is like Paradise, and may God bless you for all your kindness to us." And the train carried them away.

Now what was it that made them different from the grumbling, discontented, fretful people one meets so often in travel? It was the life that was in them. In them was life, and the life was the light that illuminated conversation and face and spirit, and gave

them the beauty and glory of heaven. All the earth would be God's paradise if men and women everywhere had that same life in them.

A Hindu trader in Kherwara market once asked Pema, "What medicine do you put on your face to make it shine so?"

Pema answered, "I don't put anything on."

"No, but what do you put on?"

"Nothing. I don't put anything on."

"Yes, you do. All you Christians do. I have seen it in Agra, and I have seen it in Ahmedabad and Surat, and I have seen it in Bombay."

Pema laughed, and his happy face shone the more as he said, "Yes, I'll tell you the medicine: it is happiness of heart."

Brothers, we have no right to go the way of life bearing Christ's name without the Christ-light in our faces, without the Christ-spirit in our deeds, without the Christ-charm in the atmosphere that breathes forth from our daily lives. This life is for us. It is possible to every one of us. We have only to open our hearts that Christ may come in and dwell there. We have only to abandon ourselves completely to be the temple of God, and Christ will live in us. Then we shall know what he meant when he said, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

XXVI.

God's Doorkeeper.

"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—Psalm 84: 10.

THE supreme delusion into which the devil leads men is to make them believe that the results of wickedness form a more substantial and reliable basis than righteousness for the every-day experiences of practical life. How common it is, when you urge upon a worldly man the righteousness of a great cause which is before the people, to have him say, "Oh yes, that is all very well in theory; as a matter of abstract principle I will admit that you are right. But for this practical, rough-and-tumble life of ours, one must be satisfied with something a little less fine than that." Now the devil has the man by the throat whenever he is ready to assert that righteousness of conduct is too good for every-day wear, and that in the trying experiences of life the shady, time-serving policies of iniquity will do the better service.

The Psalmist has it right when he says that wickedness lives in a tent, but God and righteousness live

in a solid house. And he declares that he would rather be a doorkeeper in God's house than to dwell as a guest, or as the master, in the tents of wickedness. Put the emphasis on this fact in all your thinking about this subject—that every wicked man or sinful woman in the world is living in a fragile tent that is liable to be torn with the wind at any time, and is certain to be finally desolated and destroyed. Some people seem to think that a man can afford to get wealth at any price, and that plenty of money insures happiness. And despite all the tragedies of wealthy sinners constantly going on before our eyes, showing that the path of the transgressor is just as hard to the rich man as to the poor man, Satan constantly palms off that falsehood on the youth of our time. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The rich man may live in a silk tent and the poor man in one made of rude canvas, but the harsh winds of remorse or judgment will tear the one as quickly as the other. A millionaire died the other day in New York city. He had had an abundance of wealth all his life. He had dwelt at the most fashionable hotels and had known everything that travel under luxurious conditions and a luxurious life at home could possibly bring to him in a worldly or physical way. He was a man of some intellectuality also, and had been able to surround himself with many of those things that are supposed to please the intelligent mind. Yet, when he came to die, these

were his dying words: "I have never known happiness." A citizen of another city slew his fellow man, and his home was wrapped in sorrow and gloom, his life was blighted and desolate, and all his riches and all the luxurious appointments which his money could buy had no power to bring peace. Believe me, the Psalmist was right; sin is a fragile tent which will not stand the winds of life.

But, thank God, something is secure. He who dwells with God lives in a house with solid foundations. I do not blame the Psalmist for preferring a position as a doorkeeper there to being master of a tent of wickedness that is certain to go down before that storm which shall beat all sin to the earth.

Let us study for a little the suggestions that may come to us from this expression, "A doorkeeper in the house of my God." In the large sense, the house of God is the temple of righteousness and of goodness. A man is brought into the house of God when he forsakes the frail tent of his sins and through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ finds forgiveness and enters into peace. Any man who by his devotion to God, his love for humanity, his self-denying earnestness of spirit, is able to lead another out of sorrow, or doubt or ignorance or sin and bring him into the light, where he shall see God aright and come into harmony with him, is in deed and in truth a doorkeeper in the house of his God.

I was reading the other day a story in one of our

recent magazines, which gave a little biographical sketch of a young physician. He had been in a medical school where there was in the faculty one man, named Alden, who was full of enthusiasm and noble ideals in regard to the splendid opportunities for service and helpfulness which are before the young physician. He was a magnetic man, and, believing in his message with all his heart, he caught the imagination of every true young man in the class, and inspired him with something of his own nobility of character. The young doctor in question had been a receptive nature for this noble man to work upon; and he had gone out from the college to the work of his life, with the highest ideals and with the noblest purpose to fulfill them in the work of his career. Like many another young professional man, he had his starving period, and it continued for a good while; his clothes got seedy, and the slow waiting day after day wore upon him in every way. In the midst of all this a successful humbug—who was a disgrace to the very name of doctor, but who was getting rich with a new fad—desiring the weight of this young man's honorable name, offered him a partnership and a guarantee of several thousand dollars a year from the start. It was a terrible temptation. It was the same old temptation that Jesus knew when, in his hunger, the devil said to him, "Command that these stones be made bread." The discouraged and despairing young physician was ter-

ribly shaken, and felt within him the cruel pressure of the evil temptation; but just then there came to his mind a vision of his old professor in the school. He saw again that glowing face, and seemed to hear the ring of his voice as he urged his students to be true to their noble vocation. "No!" he thundered to the proposition of the tempter. And as he walked away, he said aloud to himself, "O Alden! That was a noble leaven that you put into my life. It will not let me go to the bad, even when I want to." Who will say that that medical Professor was not God's doorkeeper?

Many a teacher in the public school and in the college has the same precious opportunity, and many seize upon it with wonderful skill. Dr. Albert S. Hunt, for so many years the Agent of the American Bible Society, was in his early years an instructor in the Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut. And during those years scores of young men, some of them among the grandest workers for God and humanity in the world, were led into the house of God by this young teacher-doorkeeper. Bishop Foss says that Dr. Hunt watched his chance with him, and then, seizing hold at the proper time, in a few moments led him to give his heart to Christ. "And," says the grateful Bishop, "when I get to heaven I will tell the wondering angels, who never had such an experience, what Albert S. Hunt did for me that day."

The opportunity to be God's doorkeeper is always at hand when we live in that attitude toward God and toward our fellow men. In the recent biography of Bishop Phillips Brooks there is this sweet little story: A poor woman, whose business it was to scrub the floors of Trinity Church, came to him about the marriage of her daughter, asking the use of the chapel. "Why not take the church?" "But that is not for the likes of me." "Oh, yes, it is for the likes of you, and the likes of me, and the likes of every one. The rich people, when they get married, want to fling their money about; but that is not necessary to be married in Trinity Church." And so the marriage took place in Trinity Church, and the great organ was played as if it were the wedding of a daughter of the rich. Ah, it was such deeds as that, and it was the spirit that prompted such deeds as that, that made Phillips Brooks one of the greatest doorkeepers for God in all New England in his day.

The opportunities are infinite; it is only the spirit and the will that are lacking, when we fail to be the doorkeeper of God to our brethren. Not long since a certain business man, living in one of our large cities, had in his employ a young man who was away from home and had been away just long enough to get very lonely and homesick. As he came out of church on a pleasant Sunday morning a rather fast young man whom he had met in business said to

him, "John, you're a stranger. Come with me out to ——— Beach. The nice young men all go there. You can read or play games, whatever you like. And there you will hear some of the finest singing in the city."

John hesitated, and was just saying, tremblingly, "I—I think I will go," when a kindly hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Come home with us to dinner," said his employer.

John hesitated. The temptation to go away for the Sunday dissipation was great. Then his mother's face seemed to come before him, a sweet face from heaven it was, too.

He excused himself to his young acquaintance and said to his employer, "Mr. Irwin, I will go with you, and I thank you for your kind invitation."

A few weeks later Mr. and Mrs. Irwin received a letter from John's home. "I want to thank you," they read, "for your kindness to my boy. His own mother is dead, but I am trying to fill her place. John wrote me how he was on the point of going to one of your fashionable resorts, and how your kind invitation saved him. He says he thinks that was the turning-point in his life. May God bless you!"

Mr. Irwin read and re-read the letter, then very tenderly folded it and put it away with a "keepsake" letter he had once received from his own mother.

"Frank," said his wife, "we did not know that

our invitation to dinner that Sunday meant all that to John."

"No," replied the man of business, "but I think God knew." That couple were God's doorkeepers that day, though they knew it not; and not a day passes but every one of us has some opportunity, and sometimes many opportunities, to be a doorkeeper for the Lord.

If we are to be God's doorkeepers there are some simple things we ought to cultivate. I have often noticed what a difference there is in doorkeepers. Some doorkeepers have such harsh and forbidding faces that they give you the impression they are there not to let people in, but to keep them out. The face is hateful and the voice harsh. Again, there are other doorkeepers with voice so kind and gentle, and smiles so full of sympathy and welcome, that one would be tempted to go out of his way to be let in by such a keeper of the door. Let us remember that God does not need us to be watch-dogs, to keep people out of his house; we must be doorkeepers of a nobler sort; we must be the kind of doorkeepers that make people want to come in. In order to do that, we need to cultivate a kind voice. It is possible to say nice things in a voice that robs them of nearly, if not quite, all their beauty. Some one has well said that there is no power of love so hard to keep as a kind voice; it is hard to get it and to keep it in the right tone. One needs to start in youth and be on the

watch night and day to get and keep a voice which shall speak at all times the thought of a kind heart. How important this is in the home and in schools where little children are; for the tone is always more than the word to a little child. If we are to be God's doorkeepers to little children, then be sure that something of the gentleness of heaven must creep into our voices and mellow our tones when we speak to them.

We ought to get sweeter and more beautiful as doorkeepers for God as we get older. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in his "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," calls attention to the fact that a violin, when new, does not give out the sweetness of tone that comes from it when its several parts have been together many years. It ought to be that way with us. As life passes on, instead of yielding to the little aches and infirmities of the flesh, and becoming sour and peevish and cross, we ought—and, blessed be God! in his divine economy we can by his grace always do what we ought—to become more patient and forbearing and gentle, and better adapted in every way to be charming and sympathetic doorkeepers to the house of God. As the goodness of God piles up an accumulated garner of mercies for many years, our own dispositions should grow sweeter. One of the loveliest things ever written about Queen Victoria is in the recently published diary of the Duchess of Teck, which contains this remarkable

quotation from the Queen: "God has been so good to me that now, in my old age, I want to confess that I have not any dislikes." May the goodness, the gentleness, of God to us work the same blessed result in all our hearts!

XXVII.

The Child and the Serpent.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Genesis 3: 15.

SUNSHINE and shadow chase each other in the Bible, as they do in real life. In the same chapter, and, indeed, in the same paragraph which tells of man's doom and loss because of sin, we have the promise of the struggle for his salvation. One can lose in a moment what it may take a long time to regain. John Muir tells how he once climbed all day long to get to the top of a mountain cañon after a California storm, and just as he reached the brow of the mountain he started an avalanche that in less than two minutes swept him back over all the space he had climbed. The struggles of civilization and human improvement in all quarters of the earth are a part of that long fight with the serpent which began with the annunciation of this text. God is seeking to build up character in us. Sometimes we are tempted to think that the improvement in mechanical

inventions, and the increasing power over nature because of them, are taking away the value of individuality in men. But in the war between Spain and the United States we had abundant illustration of the mistake of this idea. Personal character never counted for more than now.

An English writer, recording the destruction of Cervera's fleet off Santiago, declares it was one of the most extraordinary sea fights in history. He says that the fleets were not so very unevenly matched. The Spaniards were a fast, well-found lot, of modern construction, and heavily armed. Yet they did no damage to speak of. In the fleet were two torpedo destroyers, very fast, very modern, very destructive boats. Yet both these were sunk by a converted pleasure yacht. It was all strangely inexplicable, a complete puzzle to scientific experts. But there is one element, says this critic, in naval warfare, which these experts had failed to reckon in their calculations, and that unreckoned element won the battle of Santiago—the men. With all the changes that science has introduced into warfare, people were beginning to think that the men did not count. But the Spanish-American war taught us that the individual man counts for more than he ever did before. The one thing the Spanish navy lacked was men. They had good ships and good guns, but that priest-ridden, bull-fighting race, loaded down with ignorance and superstition, in a land without Bibles and

free schools, has ceased to produce, if it ever did produce, the sturdy sons that America boasts. That, and that only, declares this English critic, explains Santiago; and I do not doubt that he is right.

In our time, when people do business in multitudes, when the air is full of talk about trusts and corporations and unions and leagues, it is easy to lose sight of the great importance of individual character; but that is really the only greatly important thing about us. No polish, no culture, no wealth, no seeming success, can take the place of a strong, noble, pure manhood. And no lack of these things, so desirable as accessories and environment, can rob real character of its triumph.

James Russell Lowell brings this out in a description of one of Emerson's addresses, to which he had been listening. He said of it, a few days later, "Emerson's oration was more disjointed than usual, even with him. It began nowhere, and ended everywhere; and yet, as always, with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way, something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. Every possible criticism might have been made on it, except that it was not noble. There was a tone in it that awakened all elevating associations. He hesitated, he lost his place, he had to put on his glasses; but it was as if a creature from some fairer world had lost his way in our fogs, and it was our fault and not

his. It was chaotic, but it was all such stuff as stars are made of. You could not help feeling that if you waited a while, all that was nebulous would be hurled into planets, and would assume the mathematical gravity of system. All through it, I felt something in me that cried, 'Ha, ha!' to the sound of trumpets." What a beautiful tribute to the strength and beauty of a great soul! A noble, pure man, whose personality was greater than his message.

God is seeking to build up a great character in each one of us. He has put enmity between us and the evil one. Jesus Christ, who came as our champion, and whose "heel" was wounded in his crucifixion and death on our behalf, has the power to bruise the "head" of the serpent who seeks our overthrow and destruction. Satan is a defeated enemy to all those who fight under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

In which army do you count yourself? This enmity between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of evil is everywhere dividing men and women asunder, and Christ tells us that no one can be neutral in this war. We are either for him or against him. He is making his appeal to the chivalry of the race, asking us to become good soldiers for his cause.

An interesting story is told of Johann Nass, who preached the Gospel to the people of Germantown, Pennsylvania, over a hundred and fifty years ago. In

those troublous times his life was an eventful one. On one occasion he was traveling and preaching in the Fatherland. It was at the time when the caprice of Emperor Frederick William for a regiment composed of giants had obtained world-wide renown. No expense in money, fraud, or intrigue was spared to obtain gigantic men. Johann Nass was a veritable Saul, standing head and shoulders above his fellows. The king's officers asked him to become a soldier. This he firmly refused to do, as he felt called to preach the Gospel. They proceeded to torture him, but without any effect. As a last resort, they took him before the king.

"Sire," said the captain, "this man absolutely refuses to enlist in your service. We have brought him in to you to dispose of according to the will of your Majesty."

The king scrutinized the prisoner very closely, then, addressing him, said: "You would make a very desirable soldier. Tell me why you will not enlist?"

"Craving forgiveness of your Majesty," was the reply, "I have long ago placed my name upon the noblest and best of enrollments, and I would not—indeed, could not—become a traitor to Him. Therefore, I cannot enter thy service."

"To whom do you belong? Who is your captain?" queried the astonished king.

"My captain," said he, "is the great Prince Em-

manuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have espoused his cause, and, your Majesty, I cannot and will not forsake him."

"Neither will I that you shall forsake him," answered the king.

Being thus dismissed in safety, the historian says, "Johann Nass was exceeding glad, and preached mightily in those parts."

That is the spirit of fidelity which tells for Christ to-day. Such soldiers of Christ laugh at difficulties and find joy in the midst of the severest trials. Those to whom the Christian life is heavy and chafing are those who do not abandon themselves in complete self-sacrifice to the fight against sin. It is the half-hearted soldier who is never happy. An undivided loyalty feeds its own courage from inexhaustible resources.

Some are not conscious of this great struggle which is going on between good and evil because they have given up the fight and are led captive by the evil one. They do not appreciate the fearful loss which sin is entailing upon them. How many times I have seen men and women who had gone on indifferent to Christ and to his appeal for their love and support, until some sudden ravage of sin brought them into such open sorrow and terror that it was as if a precipice had yawned at their feet. But the precipice was there all the time, though they knew it not. The New Testament speaks of being "convicted of

sin," which means a time when the Holy Spirit arouses a man to the consciousness of the power which Satan has come to have over him and awakens him to an appreciation of the misery and doom which sin will certainly bring upon the soul. But many are losing the battle of life without knowing it.

There is a little story of a mother who had only one child, a son, and who lost him through an accident by drowning when he was seventeen. His body was washed out to sea and was never recovered. She very much wanted a portrait of him, and she called upon a famous artist, who was a friend of the family, to reproduce the boy's face and form. He asked for every photograph she had of her son, from babyhood onward.

When the painting arrived it represented a glade in the woods. Playing about were five little children of various ages, but all the same boy, as his mother had known him. Coming down the center, joyous, gay, was the seventeen-year-old lad, leading by the hand his baby self of one year.

The mother looked at the picture, and suddenly burst into tears. "I have lost seven sons!" she said.

"You had lost six of them before your son died," the artist replied. And yet that loss the mother had never felt, though it was such a loss as could never be made good.

But are there not some who hear me who are losing daily the most priceless treasure? If you run

back in your memory, you will recall yourself when your heart was tender and sympathetic toward Christ, and when your conscience was sensitive to the slightest touch of evil. But, little by little, as you have yielded to temptations to sin, your conscience has hardened, and your indifference, your selfishness, your sin, have separated between you and God. You are like a man who sleeps at his post while the receding tide drifts him ever farther out to sea. Would to God I had the power to arouse you to see your danger before it is too late!

Some men and women cling to the lower life of the flesh because sin has wounded them in their affections and appetites until pure and holy things do not attract them.

There is an old fable of the swan, which is a sacred bird in India. The fable runs that one of these birds came down to the shore one day, where a crane was feeding. This bird had never seen a swan before, and asked him where he came from. "I came from heaven," said the swan. Said the crane, "I never heard of such a place. Where is it?" "Far away; far better than this place," said the swan. The old crane listened to the swan, and at last said, "Are there snails there?" The swan drew itself up with indignation. "Well," said the crane, "you can have your heaven then. I want snails."

There is much truth wrapped up in that fable. One man says, "Heaven may be glorious, but is

there whisky there? Then, I'll have the whisky and let the heaven go." Others say, "Is there gambling there? Are there pleasures of the flesh there? We want snails." But when men and women see with clear eyes the beauty of the Christian life, and turn to Christ with repentance and faith, they lose the crane nature and get the swan nature, and immediately develop a taste and an appetite for heavenly things, so that instead of having to give up a great deal for Christ, they find that becoming a Christian is leaving poverty to enter upon great riches of enjoyment. As Paul said, the man who accepts Christ finds that "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Let Christ bruise the head of the serpent in your nature, and you will get the victory over evil longings and desires. Nothing is sadder than to see people living such poor lives when their own consciences tell them they ought to live so much grander and nobler lives in every way.

A gentleman came out of a hotel, recently, whistling quite low. A little boy playing in the yard heard him, and said: "Is that the best you can whistle?" "No," said the gentleman. "Can you beat it?" The boy replied that he could, and the gentleman said, "Well, let's hear you." The little fellow began to whistle, and then insisted that the man should try again. He did so, and the boy acknowledged that it was good whistling; but as he started away, the little fellow cried, "Well, if

you can whistle better, what were you whistling that way for?"

My friends, you whom God calls to live the life of the Son of God, why not do it? Why live a life so utterly unsatisfactory to yourselves, so far below your possibilities, so far below the splendid ideal which is set before you? If you will rouse up now to live this higher life all the power of heaven is yours for the asking.

XXVIII.

A King who Played the Fool.

"Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."—I Samuel 26: 21.

On the slope of Mount Hachilah, in the wilderness of Ziph, far down near the bottom of the cañon, the army of King Saul had camped. Three thousand soldiers were sleeping in their tents, while near the center of the encampment, with the wagons drawn up and walled about them for an additional protection, lay King Saul, and Abner, his chief general. Their force was so much superior to that of David, for whom they were searching, that they did not even take the precaution to set a watch, but, after a long day's march, wearied out with the rough travel through the wilderness, they all slept, from the king down to the teamsters.

Now David was a man not easy to be caught napping, and he did not permit the army of Saul to come into his wilderness without his knowing it. His spies and scouts were always on the alert. Before Saul came into the forest in which David was hiding the young soldier-poet was warned of his approach by

his faithful friends. On the night of the camp at Hachilah, David determined to do a little scouting on his own account. He took two trusted friends with him, Ahimelech and Abishai. They came to a spot where they could look down on the camp of his sleeping enemy, and viewed the scene with great interest. From their vantage ground, with the clear light of the moon and stars falling from the Eastern sky, David saw Saul and Abner fast asleep. He could even see Saul's spear stuck in the ground beside the bolster on which his head rested. Abishai, a brave and valiant fellow, and a man who loved his chief with all his heart, tried to persuade David that this was a providential opportunity to get rid of Saul. Said he, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day; now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time." But David would not agree to this. He said, "Destroy him not; for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? The Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed."

But as David looked on the sleeping camp the dare-devil instinct of the young soldier possessed him and he said to Abishai, "Take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water." The

people in that country drink an enormous amount of water, and to this day the Arab traveler goes to bed with a cruse of water standing by his bolster, so that if he wakes in the night he may refresh himself. And so Saul had a large cruse of water at his head. David and Abishai, taking their lives in their hands, slipped stealthily into the camp, and up to Saul's head, and took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster, and got away out of the camp without awakening anybody. They climbed back on to the hill on the other side of the cañon from Saul's army; and when they were far enough away to elude pursuit easily, knowing well the wilderness, which was unknown to Saul and his followers, they began to shout and make a great noise, and soon aroused Saul and his army. Then David, standing on the hill-top, cried out to General Abner, who rose up sleepily, and looked anxiously about to see if they were attacked. Finally, when sufficiently awake, Abner shouted back to David and said, "Who art thou that criest to the king?"

And David, willing to have some fun out of Abner, replied in a taunting way, "Art not thou a valiant man! and who is like to thee in Israel! wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And

now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster."

We do not know what Abner said. Perhaps he did not think of anything appropriate to say, and so kept silent. At any rate, King Saul was aroused by this time, and detected the voice of David. He was greatly touched at the mercy of David in sparing his life. Something of Saul's better manhood came up for the moment, and he cried aloud, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord, O king."

Then David, standing on that vantage ground at the top of the hill, began to reason with Saul, and inquired the reason for his being hunted as though he was some foul thing. He begged to know what Saul had against him. He demanded that Saul should tell him what wrong he had committed, or what evil had been discovered against him. David assured Saul that if it was the Lord that had stirred him up to this action, then he was ready to repent and make an offering; but if evil men had done it, then they were an accursed lot, and unworthy of such an influence over Saul. And he furthermore assures Saul that he might as well try to seek a flea in the field, or a lone partridge in the mountain, as to try to hunt him out from his hiding-place in such a wilderness. Besides, it was small business for the king and his army to thus be hunting down his friend.

The words of David had a remarkable effect upon Saul. Suddenly, he seems to have had a glimpse of the folly and wickedness of his course toward him. All the sophistries and excuses which he had been making to his own conscience were cleared away by David's words. As the fog is sometimes driven away by the wind, and the sun which has been hidden shines forth in all its fulness, so David's words, like a breath from the pines, drove away the mists of envy and jealousy, and the hideousness of his sin and folly shone out clear. Saul cried aloud, I have no doubt with perfect sincerity, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly."

There are two or three things in this story worth noting seriously. The first has relation to David. Here is a splendid vision of the greatness of David's character. We must remember that this was a long time before Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, "Recompense to no man evil for evil," or, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." There is something glorious in this young exile, wronged and abused on every side, hunted like a wild beast for no wrong of his own, who yet spurns to do a mean and wicked thing in order to advance his own interests. He will not take

the life of Saul, even when Saul is hunting him to destroy him. No doubt if it had been a straight-out fight in self-defence he would have felt justified in taking Saul's life; but so long as he could hide himself, he would not do it. Saul had been anointed of God to be king, and David did not propose to take the reins into his own hands. Like a wise philosopher he reasoned, "Saul's time will come to die, and God in his own time will end his career; it is not for me to do it."

The folly of envy has no stronger illustration than in this story of Saul in his campaign against David. Saul had at first greatly loved David. It would have been very hard to keep from loving him. David was a most lovable man. He was young and the very picture of health; and while he was a heroic and daring soldier, who never feared the face of a foe, there was about him the rare genius of music, not only in melody of heart, but in the most generous gifts of mind. David could play on a harp until a man half mad would be charmed out of his melancholy and see life with hopeful eyes. It is impossible to doubt that the conversation of this young poet, who was really one of the greatest poets that has ever lived, was charming and delightful. And so Saul had loved David until jealousy and envy had been sown, like dragon's teeth, in his soul. David's popularity with the people, and Saul's personal consciousness that he had not pleased God, aroused in

Saul the fear that David was to become king in his place. So the silly man thought he would thwart God by killing David. What folly to think that it would make his case any better if David's condition were worse! He did not take into consideration that he must stand or fall on his own merits.

Some of you may need just this message, for jealousy and envy have not yet died out of the earth. Remember that their folly is just as great now as it was in the days of Saul. You will never help yourself by pulling down somebody else. If your competitor were as bad as your jealous fancy would paint him, that would not make you one whit better. It is only by building up our own character into genuine greatness that we can permanently advance ourselves. And to allow jealousy and envy of another's success to make us sour and bitter in our spirit is not only the greatest folly but a great sin.

We see in this story that sin will often set a smart man to playing the fool. Now, Saul was by nature anything but a fool. He was a bright, strong man and might have had a great and splendid career as king. He did no foolish things until he rebelled against God. It was sin that put him in the fool's part, and how many times sin has done that! All history is full of the story of bright, wise men and women who so long as they were doing right possessed a judgment that could be relied upon without question; but when once they had yielded to sin the

devil put them to playing the fool. The best brains have become weak and silly in playing the part of drunkenness. The strongest men in intellect have gone the foolish path of the gambler or the silly way of the libertine. As a little foreign attraction which makes the needle untrue in the sailor's compass may drive him upon the rocks, so a little rotten spot of sin in a man's heart may turn his whole life out of the channel of wisdom and safety and break him in pieces on the reef.

It is well worth while to note that there is no safety in the mere knowledge that you are playing the fool. I have no doubt that Saul was entirely honest in what he said to David at that time, and yet David knew better than to trust him. While he believed that for the moment Saul meant what he said, he was also convinced that there was no genuine and sincere repentance in Saul's heart. On the next occasion that stirred up his jealousy he would seek his life as cruelly and wickedly as ever. So the fact that you see your sin and catch a glimpse of the folly of it, is no evidence that you will be saved from it. That lightning-like glimpse of sin which God gives men every now and then, even the worst of them, is God's call to them; but unless they act on it, and repent of their sins and turn from them, it will amount to nothing.

The only way to utilize such a vision of self is to follow the example of the Prodigal whom Jesus

tells us about in his wonderful story. The Prodigal had played the fool, too; he played the fool until he was played out completely, and one day, at his lunch of husks among the greedy hogs, there came to him a glimpse of himself such as Saul caught that night in the wilderness camp, and he, too, cried out, "I have sinned; I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly." Now if the Prodigal had stopped there, simply meditating on that humiliating fact, he would have herded hogs to the last chapter of the story. But he went farther; he said, "I have only been playing the fool. Thank God, I wasn't born a fool! And I don't need to continue in the fool's part! I will quit the job right now. I will arise and go to my father, and I will make a clean breast of it. It is a good deal better to be a good, honest servant in my father's house than to be playing the part of a fool on the devil's stage." And he arose and went to his father.

Which one of these men will you imitate? Saul saw his folly, but went on deeper and deeper into sin until he died a horrible death in despair. The Prodigal saw his folly and turned away from it in repentance and went home to music and feasting and welcome. Which path will you take?

XXIX.

The Romance of a Word.

"Nevertheless."—Exodus 32: 34.

MANY words have character. They are more than words; they are pictures. There are some words that blossom like flowers in the garden, others that grow green on the hillside, and still others that clap their hands in the tree-tops. There are words full of laughter, which come singing through the air as from merry lips. Whenever you read them or hear them, you see scattered sunshine sprinkled through green boughs and listen to running water. There are words that are beautiful, and words that are sacred. There are words a man cannot speak in anger; words that soften the harshest voice and mellow the sternest heart. There are ugly words that when heard or spoken make one feel as though one had been defiled. There are sublime words that exalt the soul and lift one up into the realm of high and noble things. There are words of peace and quiet; there are words of war, with the sound of drums and the quick step of marching music in

them. There are words that whistle like rifle bullets. There are iron-clad words, words that are like the old knights in armor, with spear at rest and sword drawn. There are challenging words, that call a halt and throw down the gauntlet of battle. When they are spoken nothing else is to be said. One may act, but to speak is useless. It is a word like that that I have chosen for my text.

I never see this word " nevertheless " but I have a picture of a man with his back to the wall and his face to the foe. The hot blood is in his cheek, the flash of defiance in his eye; his sword is drawn, and he is there to fight to the death. He is hemmed in; the odds are against him; but, *"nevertheless,"* he will do his duty and fight like a man for the truth.

You may go through the Bible, and you will find that there is scarcely any other word so romantic in its associations. Take the word on the lips of God in voicing his hatred against sin, as we have it in the text. It was after Moses had come down from Mount Sinai and found the people had gone wild after idols. Aaron, the man with the weak backbone, whom Moses had left in his place, had been overcome by the clamor of the people, and made for them the golden calf; and they had forsaken the Almighty for that silly idol. Moses had spoken to the people out of an earnest and broken heart, and said, " Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atone-

ment for your sin." I know of nothing more splendid on the part of any man in the Bible, or out of it, than the prayer of Moses on that occasion. The loyalty of it to his people was something magnificent. He said to the Lord, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And the Lord's answer was that he would go with Moses and lead the people, and his Angel should go before them. Judgment would be delayed, and would not come right away; nevertheless, the day of judgment would come, and he would visit their sin upon them.

Sometimes people imagine that because the punishment of sin is delayed, and does not follow in quick pursuit like a hound that bays in sight of the deer, therefore the sin is to escape punishment altogether. Let no one be deceived in that way. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." God does not always pay at the end of the week; but at last he pays. A man may get money corruptly, and may heap up ill-gotten gains; *nevertheless,* the time will come when he must make answer. A man may live a life of sham and hypocrisy, and keep it hid for a long time; *nevertheless,* what is whispered in the ear shall be heard from the housetops. There is only one way to escape sin; that is, to turn State's evidence against it, and drag it to the

mercy-seat of God and have it forgiven. Otherwise it is sure to drive the sinner to judgment.

You may find another very interesting and very striking use of this word in connection with the story of the spies who were sent into the promised land to look over the country and report to the army of Moses. They came back loaded down with pomegranates and figs and grapes, and full of stories of flocks and herds and marvelous fertility. They united in declaring that it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. But after they had aroused everybody's enthusiasm by their report of the desirability of the country, they spoiled it all by saying, "*Nevertheless,* the people be strong that dwell in the land. * * * And there we saw the giants, * * * and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." That is the "nevertheless" of the shirker, who sees his duty and has many good wishes and desires about it, but is scared and does not do it.

Alas that those people are not all dead! How many there are to-day who know enough for their salvation; they have been hearing about Christ from childhood; they have seen glimpses of the promised land; they have seen the pomegranates and the figs and the luscious grapes of Eshcol, and their mouths water for them; but they go on wandering in the wilderness and the desert, because they are afraid of the difficulties that confront them in a righteous life.

There is no more pitiable sight than a man who has a high admiration for Christ and a longing for the Christian life, and who has had visions of a noble career that have stirred his soul, who yet stands back and says, "I wish I were a Christian; it is the most beautiful life in the world; I know I ought to be a Christian, and that I shall never know any real peace until I am; *nevertheless,* the giants are in the way, and I dare not risk it." That word "*nevertheless*" has been the stumbling-block over which multitudes have gone down to ruin.

I want to show you another "nevertheless" which brings out in beautiful colors the mercy and compassion of God in seeking to save the children of those who have been true to him. It is in the story of one of the kings of Israel, a degenerate son of greater ancestors. Jeroboam had gone to the bad. He had been eighteen years king, and had walked in all the sins that a wicked, godless king was likely to find out. Yet the inspired writer says, "*Nevertheless* for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem." What a striking figure! That was the lamp of mercy. But for David's sake, Jeroboam would have found it all darkness long before he did. David had been long dead and in heaven, but for the sake of the man who had tried to serve him with an honest heart, God continued for many years to let the lamp of mercy shine on his wicked grandson.

I wonder if there are not some who read this who are still spared in their indifference and ingratitude, though they walk in sinful ways, because of the loving prayers of a saintly father or a holy mother, who, it may be, has long since gone home to heaven! And yet those prayers may be in vain; they were in vain for Jeroboam. God continued to let that lamp of mercy hang out for the wicked king for many years, but Jeroboam only hardened his heart against the God of his fathers. He seems to have thought that because God did not strike him down at once he never would. I can hear him saying to himself, or to some of the drunken courtiers that gathered about him, "My grandfather David was a great man, no doubt; but he was old-fashioned, and he was altogether too sensitive about sin. Whenever he found that he had done wrong, he was full of tears and repentance; that was not in good form for a king. I do as I please, and I don't see but I am just as well off as he was." And so he sneered and went on sinning against God until his day of judgment came, and he went down into the darkness of eternal night. O my friends, if the lamp of mercy, fed by the oil of the prayers of a loving father or a pure mother, still shines upon your path with rays of hope, do not spurn it or be indifferent to it, but follow that light until it leads you home to God.

There is another "nevertheless" that is full of

comfort and encouragement for every sincere Christian who is doing duty faithfully, and yet seems to go unrewarded. You may find it recorded in Ezekiel. It is in that remarkable chapter which calls to the watchman who has care of the people to do his duty in blowing the trumpet when danger threatens those under his care. The words are stern. "If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned," then, says the Word of God, the blood of that people will be required at the watchman's hands. Then comes the word of comfort for the faithful watchman: "*Nevertheless,* if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." We cannot always save the people for whom we labor; but we can do our part—we can blow the trumpet; we can wave the signal; we can sound the alarm.

One of the hardest things that earnest souls ever have to endure is to have the responsibility of immortal spirits and then be unable to lead them in the right way. David knew what that meant when, in that little room over the gate, he cried out in anguish, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee!" Moses knew, when he cried out to God if the people might not be forgiven, "blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book." Paul knew what it meant when he declared

that he was willing to be accursed if the people for whom he labored might be saved. May God give us, his people, more and more of that feeling! And yet we have the comforting assurance that if we do our duty with loving and faithful hearts God holds us in honor, even though our work may fail.

The last picture I have—or two pictures teaching the same truth—is full of comfort and consolation. One scene is in the story of Jeremiah. Jeremiah's tears have washed out or bedimmed much of the glory of his heroic character. I think people generally think of him as "Jeremiah the weeper," going around with his head down, like a bulrush, and making complaints. It is a great mistake, if you are going to do a heroic deed, not to do it with a cheerful heart and a trustful faith. "Nevertheless," Jeremiah was a great man, and one of the bravest men that ever lived. Read one of the speeches which he made in the presence of the royal family of Judah, when his life hung in the balance, and he had every reason to expect that he would lose his head if he spoke fearlessly the message God had given him. Yet Jeremiah stood there, facing the angry crowd of nobles and princes, and uttered his fearless challenge: "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pro-

nounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears." Well, the king decided to kill him, and sent his officers to have him put to death. There stands Jeremiah, God's prophet, with his back to the wall, ready to die. Then what happens? Like a flash of lightning out of a clear sky comes, "*Nevertheless* the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death." Who Ahikam was the Lord only knows; but you may depend upon it that God has some unheard-of but powerful hand to raise in defense of his people so long as there is still work for them to do on earth. When God made this world he made it so a man could do right in it, and leave the consequences to him.

And that brings me to my final word,—a word of Paul to Timothy. It is the word of an old soldier of Christ who has had much experience and is now ready to die and knows whereof he speaks. He has been talking about many uncomfortable defections from the church, and a great many unpleasant things he has had to deal with; but with a sigh of relief and a smile of absolute faith he says, "*Nevertheless*

the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." Yes, and David says that God never fails to recognize his own, even though they are in disgrace and are having a hard time. When a man is down, his fair-weather friends will sometimes pass him in the street without seeing him; but David says that God always knew him, even in adversity. God knew Daniel in the lions' den, and knew Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace. He knew Joseph in the prison of Pharaoh, and knew Paul in the dungeon of Nero.

O brother, sister, if we stick to our faith, if we stand steadfast in the right, if we hold to our religion and are true to God, then the best things will stay with us. Things have been going wrong; you have lost your place, may be; death has taken a friend you relied on; a misunderstanding has robbed you of another; you have lost money, or your health is giving way, and the devil has whispered in your ear, "Everything is going to pieces; it is all up with you; you never will be happy again." My friend, it is the devil's lie. Hear noble old Paul, in sight of the executioner's block, crying out with cheerful, trumpet voice, "*Nevertheless* the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his!"

XXX.

The Book with Wings.

"Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold: a flying roll."—Zechariah 5: 1.

On the little island of Patmos John, the apostolic saint, old and glorious in his exile, saw in his vision an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to all the people in the world. This vision of John's was like the New Testament version of the Old Testament vision of Zechariah. The earlier prophet saw in his vision a book—for a book in those olden days was called a roll, a great roll of manuscript written with a pen. To his astonishment, as the angel bade him look into the sky he saw what he first thought to be a great bird, like an eagle, soaring above him, but as his gaze cleared he saw that it was a great book, with wings, flying across the heavens. The angel then instructed him as to its purpose. It was the witness of God's enmity to sin. It was to proclaim the Law of God. It was to search out evil. It was to enter the house of the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, and destroy their iniquity.

In these two visions from the Old Testament and the New we may see a fitting illustration of the flight of the Bible across the centuries and of its present mission among men. The Bible is a bird with long wings and is out for a long flight. It is the only book that comes to us out of the dark, mysterious silence of the older world. Thousands of years before printing was invented, before there was such a thing as writing paper, or books, as we now have them, the Bible began its flight. It was written under every conceivable condition and circumstance. Solomon wrote his proverbs in the richest palace ever built by man, while some of its prophecies were written in dungeons and prisons, in caves and desert places. Some of the Psalms were born in the soldiers' camp, when David was an exile fleeing for his life; some of them were written in deep anguish by a king in disgrace; others were penned as the overflow of a great soul rejoicing in the highest triumphs that can come to a human being. Some of the Bible records had their origin back in the darkness and dust of the ages, so far that we lose the trail of human evidence. All we know is that we have them and that the presence of the living God is in them.

The Bible was written in different languages, by men living hundreds and thousands of years apart, who were the product of differing and often antagonistic types of temperament and civilization. The Bible is history, and philosophy, and poetry, and

prophecy. It deals with everything that is human and divine. It talks of God and of angels, as well as of men and women. It is a natural book, in which the sun shines and the moon and the stars give their light. It is a book where the birds sing; where the grass grows green on the hillside; where the cows low in the evening; where the lion roars in the night, and the flowers lift their heads to greet the sunrise of the morning.

The Bible is in for a long flight, for it meets the wants of universal human nature. Years ago somebody wrote a book which he called "Gospels of Yesterday," which discussed the writings of men who, at different periods, caught the popular ear and the world's applause, but after a little lost them again. But it is an everlasting Gospel which the Bible flies forth to preach. From time to time men have been hailed as saviours of society because they have been able to bring some message of comfort to what was transient or partial in the needs of the human nature of their day. They fell in with some popular phase of human sentiment. But, as has been well said again and again, the glory of Christianity and of the Bible, which is its chart, is that its teaching is addressed to what is most characteristic in human nature and absolutely the same in all members of the human race, whether they be rich or poor, whether they inhabit one hemisphere or the other, whether they live in ancient or modern times. The

Twenty-third Psalm, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians are not dependent on any local setting to make them the messenger of God to the human heart. The Bible speaks to the universal soul of man. Jesus is the center and soul of the Bible, and he was as much at home with one class of people as with another. Jesus went down to the child, the beggar, the demoniac, the harlot, and found in every one of them the infinitely precious soul, capable of receiving his message. In doing so, Jesus Christ showed that he knew the secret of the universal religion.

We are sure that the Bible is in for a long flight, because it has in it the divine vitality. It realizes in perfection Isaiah's poetic thought about the eagle's renewing its youth. The Bible does not need to renew its youth; it is forever young. It is the very fountain of life. God is in it. Men who get closest to the Bible feel God's presence there. If they get close enough, it burns away their sin and purifies them from all evil.

Fales Newhall compared the Bible to nature. Nature is ever clean, healthful, and serene. Though teeming cities may shed their filth upon her bosom, though the malaria may reek and the earthquake throb here and there, yet she has an exhaustless recuperative and assimilative energy which distils perfume from carrion, sweetness from rottenness. So the Bible, with all its various moods and seemingly

conflicting statements, is ever infinitely calm and healthful, because infinitely vital. Nature and the Bible are alike because they are twin books from the same God. God is the author of both of them; he is in them an ever-living Presence.

Theodore Parker, whom we have been accustomed to think of as almost infidel, had yet clear eyes to see this universal flight of the Bible and the great unanswerable causes of it. He found the Bible everywhere—in the cottage of the plain man and in the palace of the king. He found it woven into literature and coloring the talk of the street. He saw that the bark of the merchantman cannot sail to sea without it, and that not even a ship-of-war goes into conflict without the Bible. His great mind was deeply impressed with the fact that while thousands of famous writers appear in one century to be forgotten in the next, the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed nor its golden bowl broken, though time chronicles that tens of centuries pass by. His rich imagination saw the Bible as a river springing up in the heart of a sandy continent, having its source in the skies. As the stream rolls on, making in that arid waste a belt of verdure wherever it turns its way, creating palm-groves and fertile plains where the smoke of the cottage curls up at eventide and marble cities send the gleam of their splendor far into the sky—such has been the course of the Bible on earth. There is not a boy on all the hills of New

England, not a girl born in the filthiest slum of any neglected portion of the great city that cries to God against the selfishness of modern civilization—not a boy or a girl all Christendom through whose lot is not made better by the winged book.

Wherever the Bible flies, in heathen as well as in Christian lands, it carries the same blessed purifying influence, the same divine comfort, on its wings. Robert Moffat, the great missionary, relates that in one of his early journeys he came with his companions to a heathen village on the banks of the Orange River, in Africa. They had traveled far, and were hungry, thirsty, and fatigued; but the people of the village rather roughly directed them to halt at a distance. The missionaries asked for water, but the natives would not supply it. They offered what few trinkets they had left for a little milk, and were refused. It looked as though they must spend a hungry and a thirsty night within sight of food and water that mocked them.

But as the twilight drew on, a woman approached from the heights beyond which the village lay. She bore on her head a bundle of wood, and had a vessel of milk in her hand. Without saying anything, she gave them the milk, laid down the wood, and returned to the village. A second time she came with a cooking-vessel on her head, a leg of mutton in one hand, and a bottle of water in the other. She sat

down, without saying a word, prepared the fire, and put on the meat.

They asked her again and again who she was. She remained silent until affectionately entreated to give them a reason for such unlooked-for kindness to strangers. Then the tears stole down her dark cheeks, and she replied: "I love him whose servants you are, and surely it is my duty to give you a cup of cold water in his name. My heart is full, therefore I cannot speak the joy I feel to see you in this out-of-the-world place."

On learning her history, and that she was a solitary light burning in a dark place, Mr. Moffat asked her how she kept up the light of God in her soul, in the entire absence of Christian fellowship. She drew from her bosom a copy of the Dutch New Testament, which she had received from a missionary some years before. "This," she said, "is the fountain whence I drink; this is the oil which makes my lamp to burn."

The Bible has the same power to keep the life sweet and pure among the rich and great, beset with the fascinations of sin in its most alluring forms, as it has to sustain the poor and the simple-hearted. A London mission-worker visited a small cottage at Windsor, and upon taking a seat which had been dusted for him, was told that it was the Queen's chair. He was informed that one of the royal princesses had stopped her carriage to look at the flow-

ers, and, upon hearing from the daughter that her mother was ill, had gone in to see her. The next day another royal carriage drove up, and the Queen herself stepped out. They were all greatly flurried, but the Queen said kindly, "Don't be put about. I have not come as the Queen, but as a Christian lady. Have you got a Bible?" She was given one, and she sat down on the chair and said to the sick mother, "I heard from my daughter of your long and sad illness, and I have come to comfort you." She took the poor woman's wasted hand in hers, and said, "Put your trust in Jesus, and you will soon be in a land where there is no pain. You are a widow; so am I; we shall soon meet our loved ones." She then read the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint John—"Let not your heart be troubled;" then the Queen knelt down on the floor beside that humble sick-bed, and prayed for the woman whom she knew as her sister in Christ Jesus, because the Book with wings, that flies into the palace as well as into the cottage, had taught her to do so.

Sometimes we are told by superficial pessimists that the Bible has been pierced by some infidel bullet of criticism. But it still flies on, with ever-increasing benediction for the world. During the War of 1812 Francis Scott Key, who wrote the "Star Spangled Banner," was a prisoner on a British ship while Fort McHenry was being bombarded through the

night. He lived the night through in terror and fear. He feared, as he saw the glare of the bombs bursting in the air and heard the crash of cannon, that in the morning the flag of his country would have disappeared from the fort. As the day broke it found him peering through the darkness to learn the truth; and as it grew lighter, he exclaimed, "Our flag is still there!" And he went away that very morning to write that national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner." So, ever and anon, they tell us that some set of critics are going to destroy the Bible, and bring it down from its long flight of usefulness and blessing. But after the bombardment is over and the smoke clears away, yonder in the sky of the world's civilization flies the winged Book, still preaching its everlasting Gospel.

The Bible is sure of a long flight, so long as human nature is what it is, because it not only broods over us when we are children, making childhood loving and tender; not only inspires us when we are young with its poetry, and with ideals nobler than are breathed anywhere else; not only cheers and comforts us amid the struggles of manhood and womanhood; but when the hair whitens, and the shadows lengthen toward the west, the Book with Wings does not stay behind. When other books lose their interest to us because of weakness and old age and approaching death, the Bible becomes more precious and indispensable. When Sir Walter Scott lay dy-

ing, he said to his friend Lockhart, "Fetch me the book." "What book?" said Lockhart. The great man smiled, and said, "There is but one Book." That one Book not only flies above us, full of good cheer and comfort and inspiration and hope, from the cradle to the grave, but lights up the path into the beyond with unquenchable glory.

Up in the far Northwest a party of hunters one day discovered a skeleton sitting at the foot of a great fir-tree. Upon the tree was a paper bearing the words, "Here the trail ends." That was all. But how suggestive it was of the blindness of the human trail without the God and the Christ and the immortality and the heaven which the Bible reveals to us. Put over against that incident the closing words of William C. Gray, the great Christian editor of the West, written only a few days before he passed away: "In the old times of river navigation, we were accustomed to loiter at a poor hotel of the period, or walk up and down the landing, waiting for the coming of the steamboat. The shores of the stream were, at that time, covered with forests, and the winding channel gave but short vistas; but, while yet miles away, the boat would blow its hoarse blast, and we sometimes could see her pillar of smoke rising above the trees. Then all was busy excitement, a hurrying to and fro of stevedores and truckmen and passengers. When she had landed and made her exchanges, and turned her prow again

into the stream, there was a fluttering of handkerchiefs from decks to shore, and not infrequently some tears.

"It seems to me that I have heard the sound of the coming ship, pretty distinctly at times and more faintly and softly at others, the peal modified by the wind and by the trees. But anyway, the boat is on the river, and headed my way. She is already past due, and must not be expected to delay very long.

"Whither shall we be borne? I think that when we waken to consciousness from the anæsthesia of death we will find ourselves in the midst of silent beauty. We will need a rest, and silence is its necessary condition. An angel will be seen soaring by, waving us a smile of recognition and passing on. The trees will be still, and the river flow peaceably. No roar will rise from the streets of the city that lies off there in the blue. No one will be in a hurry, for time will not fly, nor will there be any race for the swift or battle for the strong. When the deer comes down to drink, it will not lift its timid head to search the scene for an enemy. * * * When we hear the chirp of a warbler in the trees we may signal it, and it will sing us a song. The plaintive note of the song-sparrow will tell of love or joy, not of grief. If a wave of sound wanders across the scene, it will not be the snarling note of the bugle, nor the boom of the cannon, which tells of a vindictive, fiery and tremendous blow, nor the ping of

a bullet on its eager message of laceration and pain. We will never again have a sinking heart when we think of Zion. Her warfare will be accomplished, and none within or without her walls can harm her more. The purity of her white robes will be no purer than her heart. * * * Without fear, without restraint, without reproach, we shall be free to search God's records in all realms, spiritual and material, high and low, far and near, and read aloud the truths which we find."

Shortly before his death Doctor Gray aroused from long unconsciousness, as if suddenly awaked from profound slumber, and said, "I have a message to deliver." An assistant hurried to his side. with pencil and paper, when the dying Christian dictated a message of love to his fellow-editors, in which he said: "I expect within a few hours to glide off the stays, like a launching ship, and be afloat on the wide ocean of eternity. I expect in a few hours to be in the shadows which are only a brighter life, and from that misty region I call back most cordially 'God prosper and bless you all.' It pleases me to think that this shall be among the last of my coherent thoughts." How splendidly he realized the truth of David's assurance in the shepherd's song: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

It is the mission of the Bible to fly on with its mes-

sage of hope and salvation, until men everywhere shall lose the sin and the fear out of their hearts, and know the confidence which sustains the Christian. There is an old fable that tells of a fisherman's hut which was changed to silver, walls and floors, windows and doors and furniture, by a wondrous little silver lamp that was brought into it. Such a change the Bible is working in the civilization of mankind, and such a change it works in every individual human heart where it is given the right of way.

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